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JEM
MORRISON



5. *unlike Situational Fiction* ()

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JEM MORRISON,

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THE FISHER-BOY.

BY MRS. LAMB.
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AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY,
150 NASSAU-STREET, NEW-YORK.

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[1873]

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JEM MORRISON,

THE FISHER-BOY.

CHAPTER I.

NOT LOST, BUT GONE BEFORE.

“For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.”



T was no light trouble for little Jem Morrison when he was compelled to look for the last time upon the pleasant home in which he had passed his happy childish years. Not that his troubles began then. They commenced with his father's illness and death, and with the knowledge that the strong arms and willing hands were no longer at

work, but lying in unnatural stillness in the chamber above, and soon to be carried thence to the grave. Poor Jem looked out into that future about which he had never before troubled himself, and though he could not know all that was in store for him, he did know that the past had given him joys which he might hope for no more.

In the past he could picture his father returning in the evening, his mother's smile of welcome, his own eager shout of joy, the pleasant meal, and the hour before bed-time, spent so happily in winter by the cheery fireside, in summer in the garden, where he used to watch his parent's labors, and strive to imitate them. And there were solemn hours, too, which he could remember, hours spent in reading God's holy word, in prayer and praise; and, though last, not least, the Sabbaths, with their hallowed stillness, when "father" was never absent, but on which they all went to the old gray church, half-veiled with ivy, which they could see from the cottage windows.

It was very sad for little Jem Morrison to turn from such memories as these, and recall

to mind the figure which lay so still in the chamber overhead, and to know that the next journey to the church on the hill would be for the purpose of leaving behind them all that remained of the dear father who had been such a tender parent to his only child. The day of the funeral came and went, and in little Jem's mind the reality of his loss began to make itself manifest. As there was no longer a willing worker, so there was no longer the fruit of his labor. Jem looked at his mother's wan face and her slender figure clad in black, and thought to himself, "How can such poor, weak hands work for bread?" These were sad reflections, and a terrible puzzle to a little lad of nine years old. Truly the shadows were darkening around the child's future, and he trembled as he saw the poor mother's pale face grow every day paler still; and the furrows in her cheeks were too often filled with tears which ran from her eyes. First, the two did without one little comfort and then another. Jem's former breakfast of bread and milk was different from the cup of sugarless tea at which he now joined his mother.

Soon Mrs. Morrison's earnings proved quite insufficient, and it became plain that she and her child would be driven by her ill-health and their united wants to take shelter in the only home open to them, the poorhouse.

Yet, while food for the body was thus poorly supplied, the widowed mother did not fail to go and tell Jesus of her troubles. Thus her soul was fed by Him who will not "send away empty," or cast out those who come unto him. She received of that "living bread which came down from heaven." She drank at that fountain which is a "well of water springing up unto everlasting life," and was sustained and comforted amid all her affliction. As the widow herself believed, so did she endeavor to lead her child to think of that Saviour who, while on earth, was so tender and loving to the "little ones" of his flock. But even the most thoughtful and experienced Christian often finds it hard to reconcile chastenings and love together, and to understand that earthly troubles are sent in mercy. Is it then wonderful that a child should find it a difficult task, and say, "Mother, if God really

loved us he would not have taken my father away, he would not let you be so pale and ill, and we should have the things we want."

"Do you remember a verse in the Bible, Jem, which says that God's ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts?" asked Mrs. Morrison.

"Yes, mother, I remember that very well," replied Jem; "you made me read it the other day."

"Then just try to think of those words when you cannot understand why things are sent which trouble and grieve us. 'Whom God loveth he chasteneth.' We cannot doubt the truth of this, you know, for it is in his word, and 'God is not a man that he should lie.'"

"Mother, you were very sorry when you lost my father," said Jem with a solemn face. The mother's lip trembled, and at first she found it hard to answer the child. Then suppressing her emotion, she said, "Your father is not lost, my boy; he is only gone before."

Now James had been accustomed to think of his father as lying under the sod in the churchyard, and had talked of him as of one

whom he hoped to meet in that blessed land where there are neither tears nor partings. Yet somehow he hardly felt or knew how this could be. He had heard the Burial Service read over his father's remains while he stood holding his mother's hand and sobbing in all the bitterness of childish grief. But somehow the thing that struck him most was, not the words which speak of the "sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ," but the dull sound of the earth falling upon the coffin-lid, and the words, "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust."

And so it is with most of us. In the early days of that great sorrow which falls upon us when a beloved friend is taken away, we are apt to look only on the dark side and the loss we have sustained. But when a chastened sorrow and the gracious influence of God's comfort take the place of the first bitterness, we begin to think of *their gain* and of heavenly promises, and to look forward to a meeting with those who have only "gone before." It was so with this child. Mrs. Morrison's

words brought a new idea, a ray of light, to his young mind, and he repeated to himself again and again her saying, "Not lost, but gone before." Yes. And he himself must die some time. That journey through the dark "valley of the shadow of death" must be taken by him as well as by all the millions of human beings who inhabit the world, and by yet unborn millions to come after them. All, all were indeed alike fellow-travellers going in the same direction, though from different starting-places and by various paths.

"Mother," said Jem, "you just talk as though father had gone somewhere to pay a visit, and had started a little while before us."

"And he has started before us, my boy; but we know that he can never return, though we must go to him." Then, the time for our following him cannot be arranged by us, you know. We can neither fix this nor any other day, but must wait the Lord's will. All we can do is to be ready."

"Ready, mother, why—" The lad paused, leaving the words unuttered that he had been about to speak.

Mrs. Morrison had some idea of the thoughts that were passing through her child's mind and causing his eyes to fill with those large tears. She, too, remembered a joyous visit which they once paid to some distant friends when her husband was living. No doubt the pleasant bustle of preparation, the anticipated meeting with familiar faces, the settling how and when they should go, and the holiday attire, formed, to James' notions, the proper accompaniments of a journey. So she spoke gently, and asked him if he were thinking of these things.

"Yes, mother, and it was so different when—when—" He burst into tears; he could not say the rest.

"You mean, my dear child, when your father departed from this world, when his eyes were closed for ever against all its sins and sorrows."

The mother, you see, would not look upon the dark side of the journey, but strove to induce her child to regard it as indeed a passage from "mortality to life."

"O mother, how can you, how can you

“speak so?” cried James with a burst of bitter feeling. “You talk just as though it had been pleasant for father to die; and it could not be so. He was so sorry to leave us, and we—oh, dear me! it was worse still for us.”

“Ah, my child, when I talk of your father’s death as a journey, you only compare it with that pleasant trip which was in your mind this moment, and remember that, instead of the holiday clothing, was the long white shroud; in place of the merry laugh and cheerful voice, my son only saw, and felt half afraid to touch, that cold cheek that rested within the narrow coffin.”

Mrs. Morrison’s own tears fell fast as she recalled this mournful picture, but she continued, “*That* was not the better part, James. The soul was gone, ‘gone before,’ my boy, and only dust remained, to add to dust, ashes to ashes. We must not confine our thoughts to that buried body. Let us rather think that as surely as the seed springs into life and produces another plant fresh in greenness and beauty, so surely will that body rise again. And thus, my child, we must think of

your dear father as one whom we hope to meet in the blessed land where 'there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.'"

The boy turned his tearful eyes first towards one side of the now bare room, and then towards the other, and said, "Mother, I wish we were in that land now, for everything here is so dull and miserable."

"We must wait our Lord's summons, Jem; and as we know not when he will call, we must try to be *always ready*."

"When you first said we must be ready, I began to think of the sort of things we took when we all went out together. But we could not want such as those, for father had nothing. Now I remember that text you taught me: 'Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.'"

"Can you remember anything that could help you to understand that verse, James?" asked Mrs. Morrison.

The child was silent for a few minutes, and then answered, "I think I can, mother. You went out one afternoon, last summer, and you

told me I was to pull up the weeds from the little flower-bed in the corner, and then to learn a short lesson."

"And you did both, James; did you not?"

"They were done when you came home, mother; but at first, after you left me, I was very idle. I sat down on the garden-seat and watched the butterflies as they flew past, and I listened to the humming of the bees and the songs of the birds. I wished I had nothing to do, for it seemed so much pleasanter to sit still and watch other creatures in motion than to move myself."

"You did not tell me this at the time, James."

"No, mother. Well, the time went on and I heard the clock strike. I expected you home in two hours, and one had gone while I had been idling. I got up from the seat and thought to myself, what a shame it was to be idle and to wish that I had nothing to do for you, when you were always so good to me. When I was ill you watched me the whole night through, and that was not pleasant. But *you* never complained, but did it for my

sake, and never looked cross or wished that you had nothing to do. You only tried to make me comfortable and to relieve the pain."

Mrs. Morrison heard James' words with glistening eyes, and the lad continued: "It seemed just like a voice telling me all this; and I was ashamed of my idleness, and so afraid you would come before I was ready, that I worked very hard indeed."

"The weeds were all gone when I came, James."

"Yes, and the lesson learned; but you stayed longer than I thought, or they could not have been finished in time."

"No doubt you were uneasy when you thought I should come before your task was done."

"I was very, mother. And now tell me whether that sort of readiness the Bible means is feeling that we have tried our best to do the work we have been set to do."

Mrs. Morrison was pleased to find that, in his simple way, her child had illustrated the meaning of the Saviour's command to be

ready. "I am very glad to hear that my little Jem does not think it is enough to sit idly waiting. For we must work and watch and pray."

"But I am so little that I see nothing for me to do."

"There is something, Jem. You can learn to bear trial without complaining, or thinking it hard that your dear father is taken away, and, with him, many of the pleasures and comforts we used to have here. You can pray to be taught how to endure other troubles should they come, and to wait with patience for the mercies you have already sought at God's hands, should he see fit to delay the answer to our prayers."

Jem looked afraid as his mother mentioned more troubles, and said, "Mother, I hope we shall not have more trials, for you could not bear them yourself, and how should I?"

Mrs. Morrison's voice sunk very low as she answered, "My dear, dear child, a trouble is hanging over us now. I am getting very weak, I cannot work, and we shall be forced to go into the poorhouse."

A bitter cry broke from the lad, and he burst into a passion of tears as he moaned out, "If we might only die and go to my father. The boys will all taunt me, and say I am a workhouse lad and a pauper, as they did poor Will Hardecastle, after he had been in the poorhouse and his uncle took him out and sent him to school again. He used to sit in a corner and cry, and the lads wouldn't even play with him."

"More shame to them, James; there was none to him. It is no disgrace to those who are driven by poverty and sickness to avail themselves of the shelter of the poorhouse. And as to dying, Jem, we are not fit for death if we only wish to die because we are called on to bear crosses here. Better try to trust in God's promises and his love, and to think that even this will work for good if you do so. Think, too, how I have tried to keep a home in the place where you were born. Will you not try to comfort your mother now she finds this cannot be?"

James could not bear this appeal. He threw his arms round his mother's neck, say-

ing, "I will try, indeed I will. If this is a part of my work, I hope God will help me to do it, and that both while I am a boy and after, if I live, I shall be a comfort to you."

For a little time they wept in silence, and then they knelt together while the mother prayed that her boy might be taught to see the finger of God in all things, and that both might be made submissive to their divine Master's will.






CHAPTER II.

JACK BENTON'S STORY, AND JEM'S DETERMINATION.

“And as long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper.”



HE two had just risen from their knees when a rap at the door announced a coming visitor. Jem lifted the latch, and a bright smile crossed his face when he saw that the new-comer was Mr. Warren, the pastor of the ivy-covered church on the hill.

Mr. Warren was by no means rich. His family was large, and his income small in proportion, so that he had not much to spare for the needy among his flock; yet his presence was always regarded by them as giving com-

fort. Mrs. Morrison used to say that his presence was like a ray of sunshine, such was the effect of his pleasant looks and words of sympathy and encouragement. To use the good woman's own words on the subject, "He comes and finds me thinking only of my own trials and troubles, and he leaves me thinking of all that Jesus bore for my sake."

No wonder Mr. Warren was a welcome guest both with rich and poor at Haredale.

After the first greetings, Mr. Warren noticed traces of tears on Jem's cheeks. He drew the boy towards him, and, holding his hand, said, "Well, little man, what is grieving you?"

Jem's head drooped as he answered, "Mother will tell you, sir."

"Then I think I need scarcely ask. I am afraid, my friend," said he, addressing the widow, "that you find this battle of life a hard one to fight."

"Not harder now than it has been for some months past, sir; but I get weaker, and, being unable to do my work, I see but one resource."

A slight flush crossed Mrs. Morrison's pale face, and she hesitated before telling Mr. Warren what that resource was.

"And that, I presume," said he, "is to go to some of the relatives of whom you have spoken. I shall be sorry to lose sight of you and your boy. I married you, and alas! I buried your husband. I had hoped some day to bring your boy into the presence of the congregation to witness a good confession as a member of Christ's body—the church. But though you may be far away, I thank God I can still pray for you."

"But I do not mean to be a burden on my relatives, Mr. Warren. They are not rich, and experience has proved that I am unable to keep a home here, therefore my work elsewhere would not earn a living for my boy and myself. I am truly thankful for the help you and Mrs. Warren have given me. I have felt it a pleasure and a blessing to listen to you, sir, and I hope still to have the same, though I share the benefits of your ministry with others in the workhouse."

Mr. Warren looked sorry, and Jem's cheeks

became again wet, while Mrs. Morrison's faltering voice betrayed her own feelings. Yet the kind minister thought it his duty to encourage his humble friends. "So it was the idea of going to the workhouse that made your eyes so red, was it, my little man?" said he, drawing Jem still closer. "Don't be cast down. It is harder for your mother than for you, and yet to her I can say just the same. There is no disgrace in honest poverty, or in being compelled to accept the shelter which you and yours have first helped to provide. I can only add, Mrs. Morrison, that since it must be so, you will have my respect and good wishes wherever you may be."

Mrs. Morrison thanked Mr. Warren, and said, "You see, Jem, though rude lads may taunt you because you and your mother are so reduced by what we could not prevent as to be obliged to go to the workhouse, we shall still have the friends we most value."

"Ay," interposed the pastor, "and that *best Friend of all* will be no farther from you. He who endured poverty when on earth hath compassion on the poor of his flock, though

he may permit them to be sorely tried." Then he asked Jem if he could tell him who it was that said, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."

"It was Jesus," replied Jem.

"Do not forget that, my man, wherever you may be. It will be a great comfort to think that the Saviour to whom you pray has in his own person known all the pains of poverty, and can therefore feel for you."

"Mother has told me that, sir," was Jem's reply.

"I have no doubt of it." And then Mr. Warren continued to talk so kindly and cheerfully during the time he stayed, reminding Jem that he would be taught, fed, and clothed, without having to see his mother overworked to procure less than the common necessities of life, that at length the lad's face brightened, and the poor woman's heart felt lighter than it had done for many a day.

With thoughtful kindness, too, Mr. Warren used his own influence in behalf of Mrs. Morrison, so that arrangements were made for her

admission to the workhouse without her having much trouble in the matter; and until she went there with her child the kind minister's wife took care that she wanted for nothing.

It was rather more than a year after her husband's death that the pair entered the Haredale workhouse; and in Jem's heart was ever working the desire to leave it and once more dwell with his mother under a roof of their own. And when he told her what he should do at some time, Mrs. Morrison almost forgot how many years must pass ere this could be, and forgot also the past, when she bent, like a bruised reed, beneath the blasts of affliction. But Jem could not make the days go faster or grow to manhood before his appointed time. Yet so persistently did he keep before his mother's mind what were his own hopes, that she began to picture and speak of a quiet home which she should owe to the exertions of her son, and which, though but shadowed out in the dim distance of the future, had still something real about it. In fancy it resembled that other which lay back

in the far away happy past when he who had "gone before" was with her.

The boy had been talking of his plans as usual, when his mother said to him: "When you speak so, Jem, you remind me of a verse in the Bible."

"I think everything brings the Bible to your mind, mother; but which verse do you mean?"

"This, my dear: 'Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit to his stature?' You may be as anxious as you like; but it is of no use. You can alter none of the laws of nature if you take thought and trouble yourself ever so much."

"Well, then, I must be contented. If I try to use the time well, I can do no more. I am nearly twelve years old, though, and that is getting on, mother."

It chanced, a few days after this little conversation, that a young man paid a visit to an aged inmate of the Haredale workhouse. His coming seemed to cause a good deal of excitement, and Jem heard first one person and then another speak of the wonderful "luck" which

the visitor had experienced since he first went out into the wide world. Jem could not at first find out in what this "luck" consisted; but that same afternoon, after Mr. Benton, as Jem heard the visitor called, was gone, he found out more about him.

The old man to whom this visit had been more particularly paid, was very fond of James Morrison, because he was so well-behaved. From his lips the boy heard Mr. Benton's story. "You would not think," said the old man, "that the fine gentleman who came here to see *me* was once a poor lad, without money and friends, and living in this very workhouse as you are now, should you?"

Jem thought and said that he did not look much like it, for he had noticed the handsome gold watch and chain, always very attractive articles to young eyes, and the good clothes which the stranger wore.

"But he was, though," said the old man; and he nodded his head in a triumphant manner while he spoke. "Ay, and poorer than you, for he had no good mother to love and advise him as you have. When I first came

into this place, I was a deal younger than I am now, as you may think; but I got crippled by an accident that happened to me, and I could never do a day's work after. Little Jack Benton was just such a youngster as you, in those old times, not wild and rough, as some lads are, but always ready to do a good turn for anybody, and so eager to make the best of himself, that he picked up a deal the schoolmaster never taught him. You know, my lad, there are people in this place who have been used to better things, your own good mother, for one; and as Jack was so kind and obliging, he made his way among them. It is wonderful to think what the least and the poorest may do to make others happy, if they try; and I do believe little Jack Benton made it his whole study to help those about him. And so, of course, other people were good to him."

"That's just what mother always tells me," interposed Jem; "and the Bible teaches it too."

"Ay, ay, lad, I know the verse. *I go to the good book for comfort in my old age, though*

I had no kind mother to train me to love it when I was a child. And perhaps if it had n't been for this accident that made a cripple of me, and taught me what a poor helpless creature a strong man may be turned to in a few minutes, I should have gone on thinking nothing either of the Bible or of Him whose word it is. Wasn't it a mercy I was spared, instead of being quite killed?"

James said "Yes;" and the old man's account of himself recalled to his mind what his mother had so often told him in the days of their great trial. He could find for himself, in this case at any rate, that a blessing had come disguised in the form of a great affliction, and that, after a lapse of years, this crippled old man could bend his head reverently, and thank his heavenly Father for the stroke which had taken away what the wise king Solomon called "the glory of young men," even his strength.

"Now I must go on about Jack Benton," said Jem's friend; "for you'll have to run and leave me soon. I was as fond of him as though he had been my own, and I used to

try to give him a bit of good advice when I could, and to warn him against things that were snares to me when I was a lad. He grew till he was about thirteen years old, and then he had to be apprenticed. He had been brought up by an aunt of his, at first, in a seaport town, and was mighty fond of the sea : so he was bound to a captain of a ship, and went thousands of miles away."

Jem shook his head at this, and said : " I should not go to sea. I must be somewhere near my mother."

" We 'll talk about that by-and-by, James. Let me finish about Jack Benton first. Not that I need tell you all his doings, except that he carried to sea with him the same disposition as he always showed to us people here ; and more than all, my lad, while he took care not to forget the Bible that lay in his chest, he also had its teachings in his heart. There were rough men among the sailors, who thought it a little matter to swear and break God's holy commandments. They would use profane words in almost every sentence ; and when they saw little Jack's frightened looks,

they would mock and taunt him for being such a 'milksop,' and perhaps speak more roughly still."

"I could never bear to be in a ship with such men," said Jem, still more firmly convinced that *he* should never be able to follow in the footsteps of "lucky Jack Benton."

"Jack bore all this, and more," returned the old man; "for he remembered the commandment, 'Pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you.' So when the men saw that, instead of resenting their rude jokes, the boy was always good-tempered and obliging, they felt ashamed of their ways, and left off teasing him. Nay, more; instead of using oaths, which were at first, as Jack said, 'almost enough to make one's flesh creep,' they would sometimes refrain from uttering profane words for the sake of the boy who was so ready to run or work for them. That was a good thing; though, mind, they ought to have refrained, not on account of that child, but because the God of heaven and earth has said, 'Swear not at all.' Jack was very anxious indeed to learn his duty, and never missed

an opportunity of getting to know more about it, so that he grew up as smart and clever a young sailor as you could wish to see in a long day's walk. Then with such a character for steadiness he never stuck fast. He spent his spare hours and money in learning navigation ; then he got to be mate of a ship ; next master ; and now he does not go long voyages, but has some fishing-vessels of his own, and they pay him wonderfully well."

"He looks quite a gentleman," said Jem.

"Ay, and he is one, too, for all he was brought up in a workhouse ; for he fears God, and is good to his fellow-men, without having a bit of meanness or selfishness in his disposition. And, you see," added the old man, with a look of natural pride and pleasure, "he does n't forget the friends of his childish days. He comes to see me, and sends me many a present. You would n't think it now, would you ? for very often, when people get a bit up in the world, they forget those who knew them when they were poor."

"I do n't think *I* should forget old friends," exclaimed Jem earnestly ; "and if I do grow

up to be a man, and am lucky as Mr. Benton has been, I shall always remember you when I come home."

"The old cripple will be in his grave, my lad, before you are a grown-up man. Still he believes you to be in earnest. But don't call Jack Benton's uprise 'luck,' my boy, for that is not the right name. It was well-earned prosperity, the fruit of honesty, industry, steadiness, perseverance, and, above all, of a life spent in the fear of God and in obedience to his commands."

Jem looked thoughtful. The aged cripple's last words were a new lesson to Jem. He took them to heart and resolved not to forget them. Just then the bell rang for school, so Jem said "good-by" to his friend for the present. He, however, took the first opportunity of telling his mother what he had heard, and at the same time asked if she thought him old enough to go to sea.

"To sea, Jem! No, indeed, my child," returned the widow. "Besides, I hope you will have some other occupation found for you. I would rather wait a few years longer for the

home you are so fond of talking about, than that you should be a sailor."

"Only think what Mr. Benton has got by going to sea, mother."

"True, Jem, but very few are so lucky as he has been."

Jem then repeated Old Isaac the cripple's sayings about luck, and added, "Now, if I try to be very industrious and steady, perhaps Mr. Benton will take me as an apprentice. And surely he would be pleased to help a poor lad, because I am just what he once was, and he has known what it is for a boy to work his own way upward."

Thus did the brave little lad begin to prepare his mother's mind for the parting which he knew must come some day. Not that he did not feel dread at the thought of it, for he did; only it was for her sake, and he resolved to show himself the widow's comforter, let it cost him what it might to hide his own fears from her knowledge.

The next thing Jem did was to seize another opportunity of talking to the old cripple, who might perhaps pave the way for him

with Mr. Benton. Yet when they next met, though the subject was uppermost in his mind, he hardly knew how to ask such a favor. It may be that Old Isaac's mind was similarly occupied, for his first salutation was, "Well, Jem, have you been dreaming about going to sea and earning a fortune, like Jack Benton? I'll be bound you have, and that you will some day wear a fine gold watch of your own, like that he has."

"I have never dreamed, but I have thought about going," said Jem.

"Then you are not afraid now."

"Yes, I am, rather," replied the lad honestly; "but I believe I should get over that, if I thought I was doing my duty by going to sea."

"I always said you were a brave lad, Jem," said Old Isaac with an approving smile.

"Why, you don't call it brave to be afraid of the sea, do you?" inquired Jem.

"No, but it needs some courage to own that one is afraid. Many a lad will boast of what he dare do, when, if it came to the push, he would prove to be a coward after all. And

his former bragging would make him seem all the more cowardly."

Poor and crippled as Old Isaac was, he proved, both in word and deed, a true friend to little Jem.

"Do you think Mr. Benton *would* take me as an apprentice?"

"Have you quite made up your own mind about it, lad?"

"Yes, if mother is only willing, and will not grieve too much."

"Then I'll ask Jack Benton when he comes again, for certain. And I do believe he would take you, and be good to you, for my sake. He noticed you the last time he was here, and said you were quick, though you might seem quiet. I know if it once got into his mind that you wanted to get a home for your mother, he would stand your friend as long as you tried to deserve kindness. And if you really want to talk your mother round, why don't you get Mr. Warren to speak to her?"

Jem thought this was a very good idea indeed, and he did not fail to act upon it as soon as possible.

Mrs. Morrison was at first very unwilling to listen to any proposal which should be the means of taking her boy to sea, and the clergyman scarcely liked to take upon himself the responsibility of urging her to consent, lest any harm should result from the step. Jem stood by and listened, hope and fear contending in his heart. He saw his parent's look turned towards him. It was full of that yearning tenderness which has marked the feelings of mothers towards their children ever since the day when infant Cain, the first-born of the human race, was cradled on his mother's breast, till now. Then she looked towards Mr. Warren, and said, "Sir, he is all I have on earth."

"It is the knowledge of that fact, my friend, which prevents my urging you to comply with your son's request. I will therefore only say, do not forget *who* 'gave to the sea his decree that the waters should not pass his commandment.'"

"I know it, sir; but, oh! I think to myself, if I were to lose my boy, what should I do?"

Here Jem ventured to speak. "Mother, I

could not be lost, you know. I have not forgotten what you told me when father died."

"He is bringing my own words back to me, sir," said the widow. "I told him that his father was not lost, only 'gone before,' on that journey which we must all take sooner or later."

"Then, mother, you will trust me. And I mean to try to be a real good lad, so that I may not be afraid of thinking that there is One who can always see me, though you cannot."

The boy looked in his mother's face, and saw that his point was gained, though her quivering lips refused to say the words; so he thanked her, and ran off to tell Old Isaac that the wished-for consent was won, if only Mr. Benton would take him as his apprentice.

"Not much fear of that, lad. Steady boys are not quite so plentiful as blackberries in autumn; and I dare say he will not say 'No,' if you only keep in the same mind as now."

Jem was not afraid of changing. He only hoped all else would combine to make his path clear, and enable him to get to work soon.



CHAPTER III.

JEM FAIRLY AFLOAT.

“For they were fishers.”

JEM had not long to remain in suspense, for in two or three weeks Mr. Benton paid another visit to the Haredale workhouse and his old friend Isaac. The old cripple mentioned the lad's wish, and Mr. Benton at once expressed his readiness to take charge of Jem Morrison.

“But, Jack,” said Old Isaac to his prosperous friend, “I think I need hardly beg of you to be good to the lad, for I have known you a long while. Do take care of him, though, as if he were your own, and pick his company for him as far as you can.”

“Well, Isaac, I can only promise to do what

I can for the lad. As for picking his company, that is not an easy matter. Many of the boys are audacious little rascals; but it is possible for the youngster to live among them and still be uncorrupted; though he will not do it in his own strength. However, I will put him under the best master I have, and will look to him when he is on shore: The rest we must leave in higher hands than mine."

"That's right enough, Jack," said Old Isaac; "and now you must tell the lad's mother all this. I suppose he will have to go on trial."

"Yes, better take a trial trip, for fear he should want to run off after it is too late."

These matters were all settled between Mr. Benton, Mrs. Morrison, and the parish authorities, and accordingly, with the sound of his mother's prayers and the thought of her last blessing ringing in his ears, Jem left the Haredale workhouse, fully resolved that he would never again seek its shelter, unless driven thither by sickness. Not that the boy was ungrateful for the shelter which

it had afforded to him and his mother during past years. He had been fed, clothed, and taught there; and though his mother had worked with its other inmates, she had not been tasked beyond her strength, or had to dread that bread and necessary sustenance would fail her.

Out stepped Jem, with a sunshiny face, though a tear or two glistened upon it. Hope made the brightness; the thought of friends left behind had caused the tears. Instead of his former clothing he wore a little blue wool-len Guernsey shirt or frock, the rest of his garments being also suitable for a fisher-boy. The few things necessary for his trial trip were tied up in a bundle, and among them, carefully covered with a bit of oil-cloth by his mother's hands, was a neat pocket-Bible. Mr. Warren brought it for him the night before he set out, and talked very cheerfully to Jem and his mother about the vocation the boy had chosen. He reminded him too that the first four disciples our Lord called were fishers, viz., Simon Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John, the sons of

Zebedee. "And after all," added Mr. Warren, with a kindly smile, "I am going to make myself out to be a fisher too, for has it not pleased my Master Christ to permit me, nay, to call me, to be a '*fisher of men*'?"

No wonder, after so many pleasant and encouraging words, that even Mrs. Morrison felt hopeful and Jem happy.

The boy had to go by rail to Beachley, the port on the east coast of England, whence hundreds of fishing-vessels go out to sea. It was only twelve miles from Haredale, but very different from that quiet country town. The railway station being near the docks, Jem would have felt almost bewildered by the bustle, had not Mr. Benton been his companion and guided him to his destination.

Jem had one meal at Beachley, in the house at which the apprentices stayed when on shore, and then, after Mr. Benton had given him all the advice and information that he thought would be useful, he sent him on board the little *Sea-Gull*, one of his own fishing-smacks. To the care of Dennis Chapman, the master of the *Sea-Gull*, Mr. Benton kindly

and warmly recommended the lad, and the man promised to "keep an eye upon him." "But," added Chapman, with a significant smile, "the poor little fellow will not get into any mischief this time, I should say."

Mr. Benton quite understood this speech, but James did not, and touching his cap respectfully, he ventured to say that "he hoped he should not get into mischief at all."

"So much the better for you if you keep out of it, lad," returned the rough-spoken fisherman; "but if you do," he slyly added, "you will be only the second that has succeeded in managing *that*." Jem guessed who the other was, and resolved more than ever to think that as one had succeeded in withstanding temptation, another might if he sought the same help.

James had never been on the water in his life, and when he surveyed the *Sea-Gull* he thought what a little vessel it was in which to go out on the deep sea. A few steps would take him from one end to the other; and how slight a thickness of timber would part him from the depths below, when they were once

fairly out of the harbor. Out they were very soon, and at first Jem was wonderfully pleased at the way in which the vessel glided smoothly over the surface like the bird whose name it bore. The boy was very anxious to make himself useful, and tried to reach and fetch as quickly as possible, and as well as he knew how. But in a very little while the motion of the vessel changed. The *Gull* was now fairly out at sea, and instead of gliding smoothly began to bound over the waves. There had been scarcely any wind on shore; but there was plenty now to fill the sail and make the fishing-smack seem to fly before it. Jem heard Chapman say to the rest of the crew that they had just enough wind, and from the right quarter too. All were in high spirits and talking hopefully of the likelihood of a successful trip; but somehow Jem did not quite share in their feelings. He found it very difficult to walk steadily upon the deck. Once he reeled and fell. The master lifted him up with his strong hand, gave him a good-humored shake, and told him he would get his "sea-legs" by-and-by. Jem looked

puzzled. He had always thought that the same legs had to do duty both on sea and land, and wondered by what sort of a process he should be supplied with a new pair for marine purposes, until the other apprentice explained that people were said to have got their "sea-legs" when they could accommodate their walking to the motion of the vessel. "You see," he added, "*we* don't stagger or fall when the *Sea-Gull* rocks, and you'll soon get used to it like the rest of us."

Jem thanked him, and then the lad said he was going to get tea ready, and proceeded to commence his preparations for the meal. Now Jem had made only a very poor dinner at Beachley, for the memory of that parting with his mother had interfered with his usual appetite; so that when he first smelt the fresh sea-breeze he had thought, "I shall be hungry in a little while." Yet when Andrew, the other lad, talked about tea, he could scarcely believe that it was so late, especially as he felt not the slightest inclination to eat. On the contrary, though he offered to help Andrew, he turned away from the sight and

smell of food. Andrew himself looked compassionately at Jem, took the things from his unsteady hands, and said, "Never mind trying to do anything. Poor fellow; you'd better lie down. I was just as bad as you, but I got over it in a day or two, and so will you."

Jem did not know what to think of this speech, and he was fast growing so queer that he could not think about anything. He leaned over the side of the little vessel, and felt wretchedly ill; for he was attacked by an enemy of which he had not thought before—sea-sickness. The boy had thought of the various perils of the deep: storms of wind and wave; fog; shoals; squalls that rise on a sudden. All these had been considered, but of *this* horrible sensation he had taken no account. And if he had it would have been of no use, for who can prepare against sea-sickness? Poor lad! he bore up as long as he could, but soon he was lying utterly helpless, loathing the very thought of food, and feeling as though he could not speak, or offer resistance if any person were to propose casting

him into the deep water. He thought he must die, so horrible were the sensations which attacked him; and it was a consolation when Andrew cheered him with the information that "people never die of sea-sickness," and that when he had once got over it he would be so hungry that he would cause a famine on board the *Sea-Gull*.

But James did not soon get over sea-sickness. He was almost helpless during the whole trip, and could take no part in the fishing. Chapman, the master, Andrew, and the other men, were very kind to him, and carried him from his resting-place, which on board the little fishing-vessel was close and stifling, to the deck, where the breeze felt reviving to the poor lad. It was only when they were returning to Beachley, that Jem's appetite began to improve and his strength revived. As soon as they arrived the master of the *Sea-Gull* sent him on shore, and there the first familiar face that he saw was that of Mr. Benton. "Well, my lad, how do you like life in a fishing-smack?" asked he. "Been sea-sick, eh?"

James told him how long he had suffered, and added, with a downcast look, "I have never been one bit of use, sir."

"I dare say not; and I should think you feel glad you were not bound apprentice before you tried this life. Of course you don't like it."

"I don't like to feel so ill and miserable, but I am a deal better now."

"And I suppose you want to go to Haredale and frighten your mother with a sight of that thin face. Why, you *have* lost flesh, to be sure."

"I would rather not go to Haredale, sir, if you will let me be bound apprentice." Jem said this in fear and trembling, lest such a worthless individual as he had of necessity proved himself during the first trip, should be rejected.

"So you really wish to be a fisher-lad, in spite of the sea-sickness. Let's hope you've pretty nearly got over that, though. But still, my lad, you must remember, that if you are once bound the thing will be settled beyond the chance of changing. You must stick to

it for years to come. In fact, you choose your business for a lifetime; so speak out, and don't be afraid of saying what is on your mind, and then wish afterwards that you had done it."

James did speak out. He said that he was quite willing to be bound apprentice; that as to the sea-sickness he hoped it was past—he gave a little shudder when he named it, though—and that though he should like to see his mother, he would not go, because she might be uneasy at his being thinner and looking ill.

"A word from her, a letter, would do almost as well as seeing her, I should think," said Mr. Benton. His hand was in his pocket while he spoke, and as James gave a wistful assent to this remark, he drew out a letter and handed it to the lad. "There is a letter, then, my boy, and be thankful you have a good mother to write to you. I never knew mine."

Mr. Benton turned away, and James' bow was not seen, though his thanks were heard, for the prosperous man was thinking with

tearful eye and swelling heart of his own early life in the workhouse, and his yearning for a mother's love in those long-passed days.

Jem's letter was a source of great joy and comfort. It told him that his mother was well, that he had been constantly in her thoughts, that her prayers were daily and hourly offered for him, and that she besought the good God to guide the boy in his decision and lead him in the paths of truth and obedience. Old Isaac too sent his love, and bade him "God speed" with all his heart.

After reading his mother's words James felt still more determined not to turn back in the course he had begun, for, thought he to himself, whatever kind of work I might be bound to do, I should be sure to meet with some disagreeables and hardships. As Chapman said, "There are storms on land as well as at sea, and there are storms of men's own making that are worse than any that are caused by wind and water."

When the *Sea-Gull* next left Beachley, James Morrison went out in it as Mr. Ben-

ton's apprentice. Happily for him he did not again suffer from sea-sickness, and so was enabled to make himself useful during the voyage, besides having the power to observe all the wonders of the deep. It was a curious and novel scene for him to look down into the waters and see the floating weeds, to watch the porpoises on the surface, and, when far out of sight of land, to watch the sun rise as it were from the bosom of the waves in the morning, then sink into them at night. He had never witnessed such a combination of lovely colors hail the coming sun when on shore, which was still more glorious as he saw it when disappearing in the west.

And then when they reached the fishing-ground off the coast of Norway, what a busy time they had. The hooks were baited with those shell-fish called whelks, or pieces of horse-flesh, and the huge codfish were drawn over the side, alive and struggling, to be consigned to "the well" until their arrival at Beachley. "The well" is in the bottom of the vessel. In fact these fishing-smacks have a sort of double bottom, the lower part of

which is full of holes, through which the seawater flows in and out, so that the fish are kept in their native element until their arrival in port.

Then there is a very unpleasant part of the work to do, for a small net is lowered into the well, the fish are brought up a few at a time and cast panting on the deck, where they are killed by blows from wooden mallets. This is a very sickening spectacle, though it must be done, and it was some time before James could bear to take any part in it. However, he could help to pack the fish in hampers ready to be sent to London and other large towns by railway. And a very busy time it was while they were thus sending off the fish, for if they had not made all possible haste its quality would have been injured and the freshness gone; it would have been worthless.

On James' return from his second trip, he was allowed to go to Haredale to see his mother, and to give a glowing account of his last voyage. "And, O mother," said he, "how often I thought of those words in the one hundred and seventh Psalm, 'They that

go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep.' ” Jem did not continue by repeating the next verse, which spoke of “the stormy wind,” and the uplifted waves thereof, because he thought it would bring to his mother’s mind the dangers of his present vocation. But she noticed the sudden silence, and guessed why her son stopped short. So she repeated the following verses until she came to the words, “He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so He bringeth them unto their desired haven. Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!” “It is fitting,” said Mrs. Morrison, “that we should especially remember to praise our God, James. The sea has been calm for *you*, and *my son* has returned in health and safety.”



CHAPTER IV.

THE NEW HOME—A GREAT SURPRISE FOR OLD AND YOUNG.

“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”



N still better spirits than before, James Morrison left his mother; but his next trip was in a different direction, though still in the *Sea-Gull*. Besides, it was expected he would be much longer absent, as the vessel was to go twice into another port before returning to Beachley; and while he was away, Mr. Benton executed a plan which had been in his mind ever since he first became acquainted with the history of Jem and his mother, and of the boy's desire to gain a

home for her. In order to carry out this scheme, Mr. Benton went to the Haredale workhouse, and had a conference with Old Isaac. "I am thinking of having a home of my own, Isaac," said he, "for I am tired of living in lodgings, and I shall want a house-keeper. Do you think there is anybody in this place that would suit me?"

Old Isaac's face lighted up as he answered, "There is the boy's mother, Mrs. Morrison. She is a good, honest creature, and it would bring a blessing on your roof, Jack, if you were to give her the means of earning her own bread. She is not a strong woman, at least not strong enough for slavish work, but quite able to take charge of a house such as yours would be."

"She is the very woman I was thinking of, Isaac, and if she will come she shall. Her lad is one that I should like to help, and I know he will be as happy as a king to see his mother under such a roof as mine when he comes back; and I always think that widows and orphan children have special claims on us."

“Right, Jack,” returned Old Isaac, “and not for them alone. When the time comes, or rather, when time is ended, and ‘when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him,’ ‘and before him shall be gathered all nations,’ you and I will have heard the sound of the trumpet, then, Jack; and we shall be standing among that great crowd of men risen from the dead. And our Lord will give us our place. And often, when I try to picture what that sight will be like, though I never can of course, I think about you, and I rejoice in the idea that all the visits you have paid to poor, old, crippled Isaac, and for which he can only thank you, will be remembered then. Ay, every kindness done to a poor brother in Christ out of love for *Him*, will be counted as done to Himself. And if you are kind to the widow and fatherless, you will have your reward too; and your tongue will teem with praise and thankfulness as you find that you have a share in the invitation, ‘Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’”

The old cripple's face was lighted up as he spoke, and when he paused he seemed to be thinking over the picture that filled his mind. It was with solemn feelings that the young man pressed his companion's withered hands between both his own, and said, "May God give me grace to work, *always* remembering that I shall have to stand before the judgment-seat of Christ."

Mr. Benton did not tell Old Isaac what share he had in the housekeeping plan, but he smiled to himself at the surprise he was preparing for him. With great thankfulness Mrs. Morrison accepted the offer of a situation, and rejoiced in the thought of the surprise which would await James on his return; for it was arranged that no news of the intended change should be sent to him.

"And now, Mrs. Morrison," said Mr. Benton, "I don't want you to be overworked in my house when I get one. You will, I hope and believe, be a stay, and will manage matters for me as you would for a son or a brother. When needful, you shall have help in the household work, for I can afford to pay for it,

and as to your own wages, just think the matter over, and I am sure we shall not quarrel."

Before Mr. Benton left Haredale it was all settled. Good Mr. Warren, the clergyman, gave his hearty approval to the plan, and congratulated his poor widowed friend on her changed prospects; for he knew how pleasant it would be to her to earn her own bread. Two days after Mr. Benton wrote to say that he had taken a house, and she had to set off at once to assist him in fitting it up. What a busy time was before her, to be sure!

There was the cleaning and scrubbing, which the widow did not do herself, but superintended. Then there was the making of blinds and house-linen, and choosing of furniture, in all of which Mr. Benton asked her advice, and she, as careful for him as she would have been in spending her own money, thought and worked and planned her very best. And Mr. Benton was not far wrong when he said that his new housekeeper had saved him as much as her year's wages by giving him the benefit of her careful judgment in purchasing his furniture. The young man

looked on with a happy face as he saw the gradual change from an empty dwelling to a cozy home, and he could not help admiring the comfortable air which each room assumed under Mrs. Morrison's hands.

But there were a few things in the arranging of the home which puzzled Mrs. Morrison herself. There was plainly a secret even from her; and she could not help expressing her wonder that a nice little room on the ground-floor, and looking into a back garden, was fitted up as a bedroom, and that Mr. Benton was so *very* particular about the furniture for it. Among other things it contained a large arm-chair of old-fashioned make and with comfortable cushions, and a Bible printed in such large type that, as she said, "one might see to read it if it were held yards off." A very few steps would take any person from this room to the pleasant one in front of the house, where the master would sit, and in which the meals would be served. Mrs. Morrison *did* feel curious about this ground-floor bedroom. Her own was over it, the master's was to be in the front of the house, and there

were two small upper rooms besides; so it really *was* odd that Mr. Benton should have been so particular to have yet another bedroom below. "Well, he is the master, and he knows his own mind best," said Mrs. Morrison to herself. "It isn't for me to interfere with Mr. Benton's wishes, but I suppose, as he is to sleep in the house to-morrow night for the first time, he will tell me more about things."

Just as these ideas were passing through her mind, the good woman heard Mr. Benton's step in the passage, and directly after his pleasant voice bidding her "Good-day." "You have nearly got all in order, I think, Mrs. Morrison," said he, "and very nice every part of the house looks. I feel as if I were going to have a real home for the first time in my life."

Mrs. Morrison replied that she hoped he would spend many happy years under its roof.

"Thank you, thank you, Mrs. Morrison; and let me say I look to you to be as a mother, though you are not old enough for that either.

Still I have an idea that I shall feel lonely, in spite of all you can do, unless I have an old friend to spend some time with me, and it is for that friend this little bedroom is intended. Perhaps you will say I ought to have told you before; but, really, I don't feel afraid that you will wish my old friend away."

"Oh dear no, sir; how could I?" replied Mrs. Morrison. "It will be both a duty and a pleasure to me to make any friend of yours as comfortable as I can."

"I am going to Hare—I mean—I am going to fetch my friend to-morrow, Mrs. Morrison, so you will have all ready for us by dinner-time."

Mrs. Morrison had caught the first syllable of the word Haredale, and a hopeful smile crossed her face, a smile which was only a sort of reflection of the bright look in Mr. Benton's own. Ah, she could guess what visitor was coming, though the house-master refused to say one more word to enlighten her, but went on planning about the next day's dinner, as though no person she had ever seen were in his mind at the time. So she

had to wait for the morrow before she could be quite sure.

On the next day morning Mr. Benton once more took his way to Haredale. And once more, for the last time, did he cross the threshold of the workhouse, for the purpose of paying Old Isaac a visit within its walls.

"Eh, lad," said the old man; "what, you're come again, and it does me good to see you. I have hardly felt like myself lately. First I missed yon boy that has gone to sea, under your care as I may say, and since then I have felt sorry that his mother was gone away too. I was cross at myself for the thought, because it was selfish to be sorry at what was both for her good and yours, I believe. But I suppose I shall always be selfish so long as this wrinkled old shell of a body of mine holds its immortal soul, and there is a bit of selfishness in my very gladness at the sight of you." A smile, like a bit of winter sunshine, followed this speech.

The young man shook him heartily by the hand, and said, "If so, I am selfish in coming too, old friend, for the sight of you brings to

mind your kind words of counsel spoken in my ears long ago. Those words were *seeds*, Isaac, holy seeds, taken from the Holy Book, and through the blessing of Him who gave the increase, they have not been without fruit. And now, old friend, I hope to go into my new house to-day, and I want you to come and see it, and my housekeeper too."

"*I go, Jack; now you are joking; I!*" The withered hands trembled, and a tear rolled down Isaac's furrowed cheek as he gave a glance at his crippled limbs. He shook his head, and added, "Why, I can hardly hobble to the gate, lad."

"But you *can* hobble to the gate, Isaac, and I have got leave of absence for you, and there is a cab waiting to take you to the railway-station, or, if you like better, all the way to Beachley."

Isaac was fast yielding; but there was another objection. He looked at his clothes—the pauper's dress—and once more shook his head. "I should disgrace you in this trim, Jack."

"Now that's what I call a bit of pride on

your part, Isaac," replied Mr. Benton. "Or, perhaps, you want me to say again what I have repeated a hundred times before, that I value my old friend for himself and for what he has been to me, and not for the coat he wears."

In Mr. Benton's strong arm the old man now rested his own, for all his objections were overcome. Indeed, he felt not a little proud that this prosperous man supported him, with all the tenderness of a son, and came to ask him to be the first guest under the first roof he had ever called his own. But Old Isaac could not help wondering, when the inmates of the workhouse flocked around him and said, "Good-by," and the little children came to bid him not stay long away. The master and mistress shook hands with him, and said, "Good-by," too, till, amid so many farewells, Old Isaac was almost bewildered. "Good-by, friends," said he; "as you all say it, I must say it too. But I shouldn't have thought anybody would mind so much about an old man who is just going out of the House for a few hours. It is kind of them," he added as

he was crossing the threshold ; “but, after all, they may well be surprised. I can hardly remember my last holiday.”

Isaac did not see the smile that played round his friend’s face as all the people flocked round him with their farewells, and in a few minutes he was in a cab and on his way to the station. For the first time in his life he travelled by railway, and was as much delighted as a child with all he saw, or *tried* to see, as he was whirled across the country in a first-class carriage, and wrapped in one of the warmest of travelling-rugs. It was like a rapid dream, and Isaac felt almost doubtful whether he was really awake or no. Indeed, he had hardly recovered from his state of bewilderment, when, behold you ! there he was at Beachley.

Cab again ! Jack Benton’s strong arm in request again, too, to support him into it ; and then they were driven gently through one street after another, until they came to a pleasant house at the outside of the town, with iron railings in front, which enclosed a neat little garden ; and Mrs. Morrison, who

had rushed out at the sound of the cab-wheels, trying hard to open the iron gate, but her hand trembled so she could not manage it. Mr. Benton, however, was out in a moment, the gate was opened, the cabman paid, and the old man almost carried into the house, while, in a voice trembling with glad emotion, the grateful sailor whispered in his ear, "Dear old friend, welcome to my home." Then there was a shaking of hands between him and Mrs. Morrison; and while she made haste to set the dinner upon the table, the old man looked admiringly at his young friend's new home. "It is a nice place," he remarked: "you may be as happy as—I wont say a king, Jack—but as a Christian man need wish to be, so far as worldly comforts are concerned."

"I do hope I shall use these blessings in an unselfish spirit. You must rest a little now, and after dinner you shall see all the place. There is a garden behind, and there are green fields and trees, and in the distance a glimpse of the sea."

"After dinner, Jack, I shall just take a peep, and then go back to Haredale, feeling

very happy that I have been spared to see your prosperity."

There was a meaning smile on Mr. Benton's face as he heard these words; and afterwards Old Isaac understood what it meant.

The meal passed pleasantly, and then, supported by the master of the house, Isaac visited its rooms, *all but one*, admired the garden, and declared, in short, that in such a home there was really nothing to be desired.

"Yes there is, Isaac," said Mr. Benton as he led the old man into the little ground-floor bedroom last of all. "Yes, Isaac, I want a tenant for this apartment. It would suit such a person as you, for there would be no going up and down stairs, and this easy-chair—let me see how you look in it."

With gentle force he seated the old man in the easy-chair, and then showed him the great Bible. "You could almost read this without your glasses, Isaac, the print is so large. Why, both the room and furniture seem the very thing for you, old friend, and I want a tenant. Suppose you should stay, now you are here. What do you say?"

The young man held Isaac's trembling hand and looked in his face with such a kindly smile that it was a picture to see it. But Isaac seemed bewildered, and there was just such an answering gleam on his withered face as might be compared to sunshine on the snow. He tried to speak, but his trembling voice uttered no word plainly; so again Mr. Benton addressed him, "Dear old friend, I am in earnest when I say Will you stay? This room was prepared on purpose for you, and I want no other tenant. I always think that the presence of an aged parent brings a blessing on a house; but I have neither father nor mother, and you have no child. I will be a son to you if you will let me, and I say to you what Ruth said to Naomi, 'The Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me.'"

The surprise was almost too much for Old Isaac, though he now understood Mr. Benton's meaning, and the tears ran down his aged cheeks while the latter still repeated, "Now, do say you will stay, Isaac." At last he murmured out, "I must not be a burden

to you, Jack; it would not be right; but I thank you with all my heart. If you were my son it would be different; but I have no claim on you or on any one else. You must send the old man back again, Jack."

"You ought to know me better than to talk about being a burden, Isaac, and you *have* a claim upon me though there is no kindred. When I was a lad, a poor, little, helpless orphan lad, who was it that talked to me of Him who died for our sins and rose again for our justification? Who was it, Isaac, that warned me of the snares and temptations I should meet with in the world? It was you, Isaac: you have been a blessing to me; you have given me of your heavenly things, and now will you refuse to let me share with you my earthly ones?"

Old Isaac, quite overcome, could only answer, "You will have your reward, lad, you will have your reward."

It would be needless to tell how happily the remainder of the day was spent, or how happily the evening sped as Mrs. Morrison sat with her sewing and listened while Mr.

Benton and Isaac chatted of bygone days together, or how she inwardly resolved to be as a daughter to the aged cripple, and as a mother to the young master of the house. And we may be sure that amid all the talk the fisher-boy was not forgotten. He had been several weeks away from Beachley, and Mrs. Morrison was rejoicing at the thought of the surprise which awaited James on his return.

“We have had nothing but surprises lately,” said Old Isaac; “I was surprised when Jack proposed that I should pay him a visit to-day, and again when all the folks at ‘The House’ said ‘Good-by,’ though I reckon they didn’t expect to see me back again at Haredale. Then I was surprised when *he* asked me to stay here; and now wont James be almost beside himself when he finds his mother at Beachley?”

“And I hope that will be to-morrow, for I expect the *Sea-Gull* in some time during the afternoon.”

The mother’s eyes sparkled through the glad tears that filled them when her lad was

named. After Mr. Benton had read a chapter in the Bible and Old Isaac offered a prayer, the latter was led to his own room, and soon the members of this new household were all at rest, though I think they were almost too happy to sleep much. I know the mother was, for one.

There was no disappointment for her on the morrow. Almost before the time at which it was expected, the little *Sea-Gull* made its way into the fishing-dock at Beachley. It was not bringing in fish, so there was no packing to do, and within a very short time the boys were at liberty to come on shore. As James had not seen his mother very lately, he was especially anxious to get leave to go to Hare-dale. So he went up to Mr. Benton, and respectfully touching his cap, said, "Please, sir, would you mind my going to see my mother this time?"

Mr. Benton answered him rather coldly, and said, "I think, Jem, you will spend all you get in railway travelling. It will cost you at least a couple of shillings to go to Hare-dale and back."

"Please, sir," replied Jem, "I have no shillings, and if I had, I would n't spend them. I meant to walk both ways."

"Nonsense, lad. Why that would be four-and-twenty miles!"

"Yes, sir; but I'm sure I could manage it. I would walk twice as far sooner than not see mother; and," he added, hesitating a little, "I did walk last time, for I never mean to spend one halfpenny that I can save towards furnishing a room for my mother to live in."

"Well, Jem, I can't let you go to Haredale to-day, so you must do exactly as I tell you. First step up to your old lodgings and get washed and made tidy, and then come on board the *Gull* again to me."

James was disappointed; but he touched his cap again and prepared to obey at once and cheerfully, without allowing his feelings to show themselves in his master's presence. "I must get used to be refused," thought he to himself, "for I can't expect Mr. Benton to let me go so often. Only mother and I were always together until just lately, and I have been longer away this last time."

A very neat little fisher-boy did Jem look when he went, as his master had bidden him, on board the *Sea-Gull*. Mr. Benton looked merrily at him, and said, "Come along, my lad, I want to send you on an errand."

Jem followed his master through many streets until they were at the outskirts of the town. Then Mr. Benton pointed to a neat house, and said, "Go, rap at that door, Jem, and just ask the person that answers it, who lives there."

Jem stared. He thought it the oddest errand he had ever been sent upon, and so he stood as though doubtful whether Mr. Benton could be in earnest. "Why does n't the boy do as he is told?" said Mr. Benton. "I mean what I say, Jem, so do n't stand staring in that fashion."

The lad hesitated no longer. His master bade him go, and, thought he, "What business have I to question? Does n't the Bible say, 'Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ?'" With rapid feet he stepped

to the door, and his hand was raised to the knocker; but before it fell some one, who had seen him from the window, raised the latch; and in a moment the lad was in his mother's arms. He thought no more about his master's errand. The present joy and surprise put all that out of his mind, and it was only brought back by Mr. Benton himself, who soon followed him in and said in a cheery voice, "Well, Jem, and who lives here? You never came back to tell me, but left me waiting in the street."

If the widow was happy on the preceding day, how much more so did she feel when able to share her happiness with her boy! And what tales they had to tell each other! And with what joy James saw Old Isaac in the cozy chimney-corner, and listened to *his* story also.

"You can start for Haredale the first thing in the morning, Jem," said Mr. Benton, "if you still want to go."

"Not this time, sir, thank you," replied Jem. "You have brought my mother to me, and Isaac too."

“What! should you have come to see Old Isaac if he had not been here?”

“I should have asked leave, sir, and I think you would have let me.”

“What makes you think I should, eh, lad?” asked Mr. Benton.

“Because,” replied the lad—and this time he ventured to look straight in his master’s face, though Mr. Benton was pretending to speak gravely—“because, sir, I should have said I was trying to follow your example, and to show that I do n’t forget old friends.”

“Right, lad, right,” said old Isaac. “You have just touched the string your master understands the tone of. *He* does n’t forget old friends.”

The old man laughed gleefully, and Mr. Benton looked with softened expression from one to the other. Then James, taking courage again, said, though with a husky, trembling voice, “I can’t tell you what I feel, sir. No words could do it. But, please God, I will try to serve you with my might for having been so good to mother.”

“Thank you, my lad; I am well satisfied

so far. But you must understand that I expect to owe much comfort to your good mother herself, who is my housekeeper now; so *we* shall balance our own accounts. And you, I hope, will serve me faithfully because it is right."





CHAPTER V.

A VISIT TO HAREDALE—"JAMES SACRIFICE OF THANKSGIVING"—THE SPOILERS DETECTED.

"In the courts of the Lord's house."

JAMES MORRISON went on several more trips in the little *Seagull*, and, as he paid great attention to his duties, he soon became well acquainted with them; and Chapman, the master, told Mr. Benton that the boy was nearly as useful as an old hand. "You see, sir, I can always trust him. He tells me the truth, and he works as well when I am not present as when I am; and I'm sorry to say that is not a common thing with lads of his age," said the master.

“I shall tell his mother what you say, Chapman,” replied Mr. Benton, “and I know it will make her very happy. She is the same in her dealings with me, almost too careful, in fact, and scarcely takes all the comforts for herself that I should like her to enjoy, though she is always considering for other people.”

The *Sea-Gull* was just coming in to be refitted at Beachley, and would not go out again for at least three weeks ; so Mr. Benton kindly allowed Jem to spend one week of the time with his mother. During this holiday the lad went to Haredale, the scene of all his childish joys and sorrows. He lingered round the cottage in which he was born, and saw another hand plying the spade in the little garden where his father used to labor. There were children toddling here and there, and a pleasant-faced woman stood in the porch with a laughing, crowing babe in her arms. Jem lingered to gaze upon the pretty family picture ; but the tears came into his eyes when he thought how *his* father, mother, and he used to be the happy tenants of the nice cottage. Still he felt glad that it was not changed in its

outward appearance. Then Jem climbed the hill, and went into the churchyard. He knew where his father had been buried; and how vividly he recalled to mind his weeping mother by the grave side, and all the struggles which had followed during the first sad year. Yet how the clouds had vanished; how mercifully the Lord had dealt with them! And James, as he stood by his father's grave, found that the bitterness of parting was long since passed away, and that he thought far, far less of the fact that the body was buried, than of the resurrection from the dead which would surely come.

Jem's heart was full of thankfulness, ay, and brimming over. He felt as though he should love to enter the old gray church, and stand in the place where he used to stand as a little Sunday scholar.

Filled with these thoughts, the lad advanced towards the door of the church. He pressed his hand upon the latch; it yielded, and the heavy oaken door swung back on its hinges. It was not usually open, James knew, and it was with no little awe, mingled with gladness,

that he thus found his wish fulfilled. He stepped so lightly along the floor that the aisles did not echo his footfall.

James remained in the church for some time, and would probably have remained longer, had he not been startled by hearing the sound of voices in the vestry. He rose with the intention of going quietly out of the church, thinking that the clerk, and perhaps Mr. Warren, might be the speakers. Well, if either or both of these saw him, he should not fear that they would chide him for visiting the dear old sacred walls within which he used to worship. But though Jem wished to see Mr. Warren before returning to Beachley, he had no desire to intrude upon him in such a place; so he advanced a step or two with the intention of leaving the church as quietly as he had entered it, when other words reached his ears, and made him stand as if rooted to the spot. Ah, he well knew now that unhallowed and blasphemous words would not be uttered *there*, except by such as had entered the old church with evil purpose. What was James to do? He could not leave the build-

ing without passing the vestry door, and if he were discovered, he knew not what might be the consequence; whereas, if he remained still, he might find out what these men were doing in the sacred building. That they were there for any good purpose he could not imagine; and that they should venture on entering the church with evil intent so early in the evening seemed bold indeed.

It would, James thought, be wise for him to conceal himself, so that he might see without being seen; and for a moment he felt almost sorry that the old square pews were gone, and low stalls put in their places. But still there *was* a suitable hiding-place; and as all these thoughts had come into the lad's mind in far less time than it takes to tell them, so in a moment did he bethink himself what to do.

Hareedale church had been for hundreds of years the burial-place of a noble family, and contained many beautiful old monuments erected to the memory of its various members. Some of these were marble tablets on the wall; but there was one on which Jem

had gazed with wonder and delight ever since he, a very little boy, was first taken to church. He used to think it very much like a bed made of marble, on which lay statues of the old earl and countess, who lived in the time of Queen Elizabeth. At each corner was a marble pillar, and round the top, on a sort of cornice, was an inscription, telling, in the quaint style and spelling of the time, the virtues of those who lay below. Higher still was an escutcheon, gorgeous in gold and colors; and James used to admire its gay hues, and wonder what was the meaning of the odd figures upon it.

This stately monument was not close to the wall, and as James glanced at it he determined to hide himself behind it. As softly as possible the lad took up his station, and found that he could see without being seen, and that no persons could leave the vestry without his having a full view of them. James guessed what was the object of these men, for Hare-dale church had possessed for ages a very costly and beautiful service of plate, for use when the Lord's supper was administered;



and he had heard that it had been presented by the good old earl and countess behind whose stately monument he now lay hid. He could not help hoping that the strong oaken chest in which the plate was kept would prevent any person from reaching and carrying it off.

The lad's ears were strained to catch every sound, and though he could not distinguish words, he heard something like the ring of metal and the fall of a bunch of keys. The next moment he saw two men leave the vestry, and at once recognized them, as they had passed him on the road from Beachley that very morning. He knew they must have come through Haredale to reach the church, for the whole town lay in the dale, while the church was on a rising ground quite beyond the last house. When they had once descended the opposite slope to that by which they had entered the churchyard, they would be on the highroad, and there was not a single house for half a mile; so that they were not likely to meet the same persons who might have seen them pass through the town in the dale.

James half raised himself, that he might be ready to follow as quickly as possible, when he found that the men had not finished their work. One of them guarded the unfastened door of the church while the other began to change his dress. Up to that time they had worn loose frocks, such as farmers wear. Both had light hair, cut very short, and no whiskers. But James saw with surprise, that when the man stripped off the frock, he had on a good suit of cloth clothes, and that by adding false whiskers and hair he was in a minute or two so changed in appearance, that if he had not actually seen the alteration made, he should not have known him again. When he had finished, the other man took his turn. The long frocks were rolled up, with the articles of plate wrapped in them, and the whole were slipped into a carpet-bag, which, when empty, had most likely been hidden under one of those long, loose frocks. If any person had even entered the church after this change of clothing, he would have supposed that these thieves were two respectable passing travellers, who had strolled in to look at the vener-

able building and the beautiful monuments it contained.

After a careful survey the thieves prepared to leave the place, and, as James expected, they did not go down the hill on the town side. How the lad wondered, that just after robbing the house of God, these men could not only leave it with careless gait, but could actually pause to look up at the old walls, as if in admiration of their gray stones, nearly veiled with ivy.

The moment James could safely leave the church, he did so, and rushed down into the town as if his feet were winged. Fortunately, he met the police officer in the street, and to him, as quickly as his almost breathless state would allow, he told his tale.

"Well done, my lad," said the officer; "we will have them, never fear; and now you must go to the railway-station with me this minute."

"But, sir, the men went the other way," replied James, astonished that Mr. Procter, the officer, should do otherwise than follow them instantly.

Mr. Procter smiled, and said, "Nevertheless, we shall go to the railway-station, my lad, if you please."

James was ready to run away, when he heard this, for it seemed to him as though all his endeavors to save the church plate would prove in vain. Perhaps Mr. Procter had some notion of what James was thinking, for he said, "Come, you must trust to me, my lad. I have had many years' experience, and your young head must give way to my old one."

Even while he spoke, the police officer had taken Jem by the arm and given him a good-humored twist in the direction he wished him to go, saying, "In the queen's name." The youth therefore yielded, and with rapid steps the two went towards the railway-station. "We have plenty of time," said Mr. Procter, as they stood on the platform. "Most likely we shall have a few minutes to wait, as those gentlemen will not come until just before the Beachley train starts, and that will not be for ten minutes more. Now just watch the entrance, and I will stand within this waiting-

room, close by; for it will be better for me to be out of sight, as I am such a well-known character."

Still full of wonder, James did as he was told, and after waiting until within two or three minutes of the train-time, he saw the men for whom he was watching, enter the station and apply for tickets. Without losing an instant he summoned Mr. Procter, who seized one of the men, while Jem boldly laid hold of the other, and with the aid of two of the porters, whom the officer called to assist, the thieves were soon lodged in the police-station, carpet-bag and all. To the infinite delight of James, the whole of the massive church plate was found as he had described, and thus the entire truth of his story was established.

At the police-station James met Mr. Warren, who had come to inform the policemen that the robbery had just been discovered, and to ask assistance for the capture of the thief or thieves.

"We are beforehand with you, Mr. Warren," said the officer. "The thieves are al-

ready caught, thanks to this youth;" and he pointed out James Morrison, whom the clergyman in his anxiety and excitement had not noticed. "Tell your own story, Jem," added Mr. Procter.

This Jem did; or, at least, he told how he had been in the church, and what he saw there, as also the steps taken by Mr. Procter for the seizure of the thieves. "And," he modestly added, "I am afraid the men would have got clear away if there had been no wiser head than mine, for I should never have thought of the railway-station at all."

Mr. Procter laughed heartily. "I am glad to see, my lad, that you are too ignorant of the tricks which crime and sin cause men to invent, to know how to plot against them so as to render their schemes useless. Now, from what you told me in those few words, I knew we had old hands to deal with, who would never start walking across an open country like ours beyond Haredale; for there is no place of concealment, no railway, in fact no chance of escaping us for a single day. The altered dresses, the fact of its being just

train time, and other things together, convinced me in a moment that the sacrilegious wretches would make their way back to the station, and get out of the town with their plunder as quickly as possible. That was the meaning of their slow departure from the scene of their crime; for when they went into the church they entered it as working men. When once outside—and thanks to those old trees, almost as ancient as the church, nobody was likely to see them leave it—they took the character of admiring travellers, you know, James.”

The youth was now enlightened as to the cause of Mr. Procter's proceedings, and frankly owned his own ignorance in comparison. “I hope you never will have such an experience of the dark side of men's lives as my office has given me,” said Mr. Procter. “But still there is no reason why you should not rejoice at having been the instrument in checking such a career of iniquity; and I congratulate you on your success. The next time these prisoners of mine travel it will not be without a guard, and they will have no

chance of choosing their road, I can tell you."

"It is just and necessary that such wretches should be checked in their career," replied the pastor.

After a little more conversation, Mr. Warren asked James if he intended to return to Beachley that evening; and on being told that he did not, he very kindly invited the lad to go up to the parsonage. "Mrs. Warren will be glad to hear about your own and your mother's doings," said he; "and besides, you can then tell her this tale about the robbery; she will like to have it from your own lips, I know; and we shall manage to find you shelter and a bed for the night. Besides, now I think of it, the men will be examined before the magistrates in the morning, and you will be wanted to give evidence against them."

James heartily thanked Mr. Warren, and accepted his kind invitation. "I meant to come and see you, sir," said he, "for I should not have felt comfortable to go back to Beachley without hearing how you were, and telling you about ourselves."

At the parsonage James was very kindly received by Mrs. Warren, and for the third time he had his story to relate.

“Well, James,” said the lady, “you will, I am sure, rejoice that you have been the instrument of preventing our dear old church from being despoiled. The rich old earl and countess gave that beautiful silver-plate to the church, and now a poor lad has given it back again.”

“But, James,” said Mr. Warren, “how did it happen you were in the church at the time? for, by what you say, the men must have entered after you.”

The youth blushed and hesitated, but did not, at first, answer the question. Observing this, Mrs. Warren kindly interposed with the remark, “We are sure, James, that you were not there for any wrong purpose, and therefore if you do not like to tell you need not.”

“Indeed, Mrs. Warren,” replied James, “I have no cause to be ashamed of the purpose which took me there, only there are some thoughts and feelings you know that—” There was another pause which Mr. Warren

filled up by saying, "Which seem to be just between ourselves and Him who alone can read the very thoughts and intents of our hearts."

"That was just what I meant to express, sir, only I could not find the exact words, as you can, in a moment. But still, I *will* tell you why I went into the church." Then he related how he had stood by his father's grave, and thought first of the trials that had followed his death, and then of the many mercies which came after, until he had been impelled to enter into the house of God and give utterance to his feelings in its very courts. This simple relation of the thoughts and motives which caused him to enter the sanctuary, moved both Mr. and Mrs. Warren not a little. Tears came into the lady's eyes, and her husband shook James by the hand and uttered a fervent wish that the lad might always acknowledge God's goodness in the same spirit.

James echoed the wish in his heart, and then asked Mr. Warren how it happened that the church door was unfastened.

"Some workmen had been engaged there

during the day," replied the minister, "and, indeed, for a week past. For their convenience the outer door was left open, as it had often been before, as we seemed to consider the sacred character of the place a sufficient protection. The thieves had unlocked the vestry-door and the oaken chest by means of skeleton keys, and, when they left the place, had locked them again in the same manner, so that we might not have missed the plate for a day or two, if a man had not called on the clerk for a copy of an entry in the church records, which was wanted this evening. In consequence of this the clerk and I went to the church, opened the chest in which both the books and plate were kept, and thus we discovered the loss, though, but for you, we might never have obtained a clew to the offenders. I have no doubt the thieves had watched the workmen leave the church, and your quiet entrance had not been observed by them. How this was we cannot tell—we only know and rejoice that things are as they are."

After this the pastor and his wife talked with James about his own and his mother's

improved prospects and position. On the following morning the lad went with Mr. Warren to the police-court, and gave evidence respecting the robbery. The thieves were committed for trial, and a few weeks afterwards were transported, as it was found that this was not their first offence. James had all his tale to tell over again to his mother, Mr. Benton, and old Isaac, when he got back to Beachley. As they were Haredale people, they felt great interest in it, and were truly glad that the old gray church had been saved from being despoiled.





CHAPTER VI.

JAMES IN PERIL BY SEA—FURTHER TROUBLES ON LAND.

“There came down a storm of wind.” “Among thieves.”

WHEN the *Sea-Gull* was ready for sea again, James cheerfully returned to his labors on the deep. There was, however, a change in the crew. The master's son, his former companion, was removed to another vessel. One of the men went away also, and two new hands took their places. James was very glad that his old master still remained in the *Sea-Gull*, for Chapman, mindful of Mr. Benton's wishes, had always shown the fatherless lad great kindness, and striven to preserve him from evil associates as well as to warn him against temptations. One of the

new men was named Collins ; and from a word or two which the master said, James found out that he had been a person of intemperate habits. However, on board the *Sea-Gull* there would be no chance for him to indulge them, as the lad well knew, though he could not help feeling a little dread lest he should at some time cause discomfort among the crew. As Collins proved to be very good-natured on closer acquaintance, and was a most industrious fisherman, James gradually forgot his fears, and really liked the new hand.

The *Sea-Gull* did not return to Beachley with this cargo of fish, but, as had been done before, went into another port. While there, Collins was so perfectly steady and well-behaved, that the master too forgot his former doubts about the man ; and when it chanced that something was found to be wanting after the little vessel was fairly out of the harbor, the new hand was sent back in the boat to fetch it. James Morrison and the other lad accompanied him, and Collins was especially cautioned to lose no time in performing his errand and coming back to the *Sea-Gull*.

Collins and the boys were within a few yards of the landing-place at which the boat was moored, when they were met by a man who looked hard at the former and then held out his hand. "Well! to think I should meet you here, of all places," said he. "Come along and have a glass, and just tell me what you are doing and how you get on." Collins said something about being in a hurry and wanting to get back to the vessel, but the other would hear of no excuse.

"I say you *must* come," he replied. "Why, man, a glass will take but a minute to drink. It is only going a few paces down the street, and back again. Those lads can wait for you in the boat."

Collins hesitated a moment. He knew well how it was with him, and that he never could take one step on the wrong path without its being followed by many more. But unhappily he also found it very hard to say "No;" and when therefore his old acquaintance seized him by the arm and repeated his invitation, he bade the two lads go down to the landing-place and he would follow them al-

most directly. Then he and his companion were soon lost to sight within the doors of a public-house. Poor James felt all his old dread return, and when first half an hour, and then a whole one passed, without his seeing Collins, he began to be very uneasy indeed. At his request the other boy went in search of Collins, for it was beginning to grow dusk. James knew that his master would be expecting him, and indeed that they ought now to be on board the *Sea-Gull*, as evening was closing in.

Still he waited now alone, and after what seemed to him a long time his fellow-apprentice returned, but still without Collins. "He says he will come directly," said the lad to James, "but I doubt it. And if he should keep his word I'm afraid he wont be of much use. It is a good thing that we can both row, and that the moon is rising, for I durst not go off in the dark."

Another anxious hour was passed, and the two youths were considering whether it would be better to give up all hope of returning to their vessel that night, when Collins reeled

down to the landing-place and took his place in the boat. In obedience to his orders, the lads followed, though they cast timid glances at the darkening clouds which had begun to gather round and obscure the light of the rising moon.

The wind, too, was gradually increasing, and James knew that when they were once outside the harbor, it would be against them; and he doubted whether, by exerting themselves to the utmost, they two would be able to row so as to reach the *Sea-Gull*.

Every moment it became more evident that Collins would be of little use, and so it proved. When out of the harbor, and exposed to the full force of the wind, the boys, feeling themselves unable to manage the boat by themselves, begged Collins to help them, but all in vain. Stupefied and powerless, the man, instead of assisting, sunk down in the bottom of the boat, seemingly caring or knowing nothing of his and their dangerous position. The terrified lads strove with all their might to reach the vessel, but felt that, the wind being against them, they were losing ground,

and being actually borne in the wrong direction. What a situation was theirs! They had left the friendly harbor, and were now unable to contend against the wind, which was increasing every instant, and the gathering darkness.

At length the two lads ceased their efforts, for they found they were spending their strength to no purpose, and the boat, storm-driven, sped over the wide waste of waters they knew not whither, or at what moment it might be upset. They had no heart to speak, and if they had done so their voices would scarcely have been heard amid the storm which had now broken upon them.

Poor James thought of his mother, by Mr. Benton's quiet fireside, and in the midst of his great peril could not but feel thankful that she was sheltered under such a roof. And if he should be lost, drowned on this stormy night, what a shock it would be to her, he thought; for, even at this terrible time, he did not forget her.

And did James forget Him whom both wind and seas obey? Ah! no. The lad lifted up

his heart in earnest prayer, and even as he did so sweet comforting words came into his mind: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble;" "The voice of the Lord is mightier than many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea."

Often, both before and since he first went to sea, James had pictured to himself that Bible scene when the disciples were in the ship, and it "in the midst of the sea tossed with waves." He remembered now a sermon he had once heard on this subject, in which it was pointed out that the disciples, though in trouble and difficulty, had the great comfort of being able to feel that they experienced them while on the path of duty; for Jesus had himself constrained them to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side. The minister had also told his hearers that if *they* met with trials or perils while performing their duties, they might then lift up their hearts and voices in the confident hope that their prayer for help would be both heard and answered. These thoughts greatly encouraged poor James.

Still the wind blew, and still the helpless, intoxicated man lay at the bottom of the boat, while the lads vainly strove to peer through the darkness, until, at length, a flash of lightning just showed them the foaming waters. Then all was hidden again, until another flash came, and, quite near to them, James and his companion distinguished the outline of a vessel. Its being so near increased their danger, for each moment the poor lads expected to feel it strike their frail boat, and shatter it to atoms. They hardly dared breathe, but gazed into the gloom with straining eyes. Flash after flash of lightning now came so quickly, that all around them could be clearly seen, and, with a shudder, James saw the bowsprit of the large vessel over the boat, and, as it seemed, within his reach. But before he could make an attempt to grasp it, the vessel was lifted on another wave, and high above his head went the bowsprit. There was darkness again, and now James almost gave up hope, and waited, expecting the vessel would strike against the boat, when, wonderful to tell, the next flash

of lightning showed the bowsprit again sinking downwards as the vessel pitched forwards. James uttered a loud cry, and bade the other lad try to grasp it; while, even as he spoke, he seized the bowsprit himself, and clung as only those can who cling to save their lives. He was lifted high in the air, and at the same instant he felt the vessel come in contact with the boat. Alas! he was alone on the bowsprit, and of his late companions he never again saw a trace. The poor lad and the helpless drunkard were alike swallowed by the raging waters.

But James could not yet think of them. It required a desperate struggle to fix himself firmly in his present position, with the vessel tossing and the wind almost strong enough to blow him off into the sea. He succeeded, however, and soon he was perceived by the sailors, and assisted to the deck, though with some difficulty, as his strength was almost exhausted. Indeed, when the rough but kindly hands loosed their hold of him, he dropped almost senseless. In a little time he recovered, and when the storm abated, and the sail-

ors could listen, he was able to tell how he had been preserved, and to thank them for their timely aid.

Though thankful for his escape, the lad's heart was very heavy when he thought of his late companions, and he respectfully asked the captain of the brig, on board of which he was, whether he thought there was any chance of their having been saved.

The captain shook his head. "No, my lad," said he; "one could hardly expect two such escapes in a single night. Yours was little short of a miracle, and it is a thing for you to remember and thank God for as long as you live."

Deeply did James feel the truth of this last remark, and the tears sprang into his eyes as he thought how terribly he had been parted, by sudden and violent death, from those who, but a few hours before, were full of life and health. And he must look to meet them no more until that great day when the sea shall give "up the dead that are in it."

Of course the lad also felt deeply for all those who would mourn him as dead; his

good mother, Mr. Benton, Old Isaac, and his master on board the *Sea-Gull*; but then he hoped soon to let them know that he was alive and well. The ship he was on board of was bound for a distant land, and he feared that he might be taken on a long voyage, and far away from home.

But the captain was a kind-hearted man, and both understood and felt for Jem's anxiety about his widowed mother. He, therefore, at some trouble and inconvenience to himself, sent James on shore when the vessel was off a port on the southern coast. It was a long way from Beachley; but still it was England, and the lad could write to his mother immediately, and let her know that he was safe. The captain and sailors did not allow the lad to leave the ship without any money. They made a little subscription among themselves, and thus raised a sufficient sum to pay Jem's expenses home; so he had this act of kindness to thank them for in addition to all they had already shown him. With many good wishes the boy was landed at a place fully three hundred miles from Beachley, but

he trod its streets with a light and thankful heart.

At first he thought of starting directly for home; but, on inquiry, he found that he could travel at far less expense by the early morning train, and he had not more than enough money for the cheaper journey and for his wants by the way. Besides, he considered that it would, after all, be better for him to write to his mother, and warn her that he hoped to follow the letter in a few hours.

As James had never been in that place before, he felt a little bewildered. It was a large seaport. Many persons were in the streets, and the whole scene was one of bustle and activity. Anxious, first of all, to despatch a letter, the lad asked his way to the post-office, and, on his way thither, he looked round for a stationer's shop, as which he might obtain the necessary writing materials. He was within sight of both, when he found himself amid a crowd of persons who were all gazing upwards at something which seemed to attract their attention. James paused also—indeed it would have been difficult for

him to pass along—and he soon saw what the people were gazing at. On the steeple of the church that was just before his eyes, was a man busily engaged in fixing a newly-gilded vane. The man's position was one of great peril, it seemed to James, and he trembled as he saw him standing on what appeared to be a mere point, and at such a giddy height from the ground. Like all the rest of the gazers, the lad was unable to take his eyes off the man, and watched his every movement with a sort of fascination mingled with dread.

But the event proved that there was no occasion for fear. The man completed his task in perfect safety; and, not satisfied with this, he sprang lightly on one of the pinnacles, and stood there, like a statue, for some moments before he prepared to descend. A burst of applause from the gazing crowd below, followed this daring feat, and the man, satisfied with what he had done, gathered his tools, and was lost to sight until he emerged from the door of the church. Then the crowd made a rush to follow him, and by the pressure of people James was pushed down and

his shin grazed sharply against the curb-stone.

He scarcely heeded the pain at the time, but regretting the loss of these few minutes, and afraid of missing the post, he hurried into a stationer's shop, and asked for a sheet of paper, an envelop, and stamp.

The young man who reached these articles, noticing his dress, and guessing that he was a fisher-boy wishing to write home, kindly offered him a pen and ink, and said, "If you like, you may write here. You will just save the post."

James thanked him, and felt for his money to pay for these little matters, when, to his surprise, it was not to be found. First he thrust his hand in one pocket, then into the other, but all to no purpose. The money was gone, and he had not even twopence to pay for the stamp and paper. He had either been robbed, or had lost his little hoard, the gift of the captain and sailors.

The shopman watched James narrowly as he pursued his unsuccessful search, and, on seeing the lad's face turn deathly pale, he

asked what was the matter. James told him that his money was gone, he knew not how or when.

"Ah! then I suppose you got mixed up in that crowd just now, did you?" inquired the shopman.

"Yes; and when the people began to move I was accidentally pushed down and I struck my leg against the curb. I wonder if I lost the money then. It was in a little canvas-bag. I know the exact spot where I fell."

"I should say now," replied the shopman, "that you were pushed down on purpose by the person or persons who stole your money. Such things are of daily occurrence here. You might tell the police, but still you would be little better for that, as the cash you would not know again, and no doubt that little canvas-bag would be destroyed directly. Have you friends here?"

The question made Jen's lips tremble as he answered, "No. I was one saved out of three in the storm four nights ago, and was put on shore here from an outward-bound

ship, with just money enough to pay my expenses to Beachley."

"Beachley! why, let me see, that must be a long way off."

"Three hundred miles; and I am really penniless. I shall not want these now, sir, thank you," said Jem, pushing aside the paper and stamp. "I have no means of paying for them."

He said "Good afternoon," and turned to leave the shop, when the young man cried, "Here, my lad, stop. I think you will have more need of them. Take the paper and welcome, and get your letter written. Don't lose a minute."

Thanking him heartily, James sat down and wrote a few hurried lines to his mother, explaining, as briefly as possible, his present situation, and the cause of it. As soon as it was finished he started to his feet again, with the intention of running to the post-office, which was only a few doors farther. But he could not help uttering a cry of pain when he again placed his feet upon the ground.

"I doubt you have hurt yourself more than .

you at first thought," said the shopman. "Here, Jack," he added, addressing the errand-boy, "run with this letter to the post-office, or it may be too late."

"I am very much obliged to you, sir," said James. "I do feel a good deal of pain just now; but perhaps it is with sitting, and when I walk it may go off again."

The shopman smiled as he answered, "I am afraid that walking on a lame leg is not likely to mend it."

A queer sort of rising in Jem's throat prevented him from speaking directly. Never, except on that terrible night in the boat, had he felt so forlorn. In two days he could have an answer to his letter, but how was he to subsist in the meanwhile?

These ideas caused his voice to tremble as he once more heartily thanked the young shopman, and then he went towards the door. He was obliged to walk slowly, and before he had gone many paces from the shop the errand-boy overtook him. The master had sent him to advise James to state his case at the police-office. The little boy added,

“And I am to show you the way to the office.”

This he did, and when there the destitute fisher-lad told what had befallen him since his arrival in the place.

The policeman said he was very sorry for him, but he could do nothing. As to recovering his money, *that* was quite out of the question, though there was little doubt his pocket had been picked of the canvas-bag and its contents.

Poor Jem! he knew not where to obtain a supper or a bed, and added to this he felt the pain in his injured leg increase with every step. “What am I to do?” said he to the policeman.

“You must go to the relieving officer,” was the reply. “He will give you a night’s lodging, or at least an order for one, I dare say. He lives about half a mile from here.”

Then the man told James which streets to go down, when to turn to the right and when to the left, and so dismissed him.

Wearily the lad started again, and after more inquiries succeeded in finding the reliev-

ing officer's house. He gave a timid single rap at the door, and when the servant came, asked if the master was at home.

The girl looked crossly at poor Jem. Most likely she had a great many similar applicants to answer, and did not like to be called from her work. "No," she replied, and was about to shut the door, but James asked when and where he should be able to see him.

"Oh, I should think in an hour's time ; but he is very uncertain. He has so much to do. But if you wait about here you will be sure to see him when he does come, for he doesn't stay long in the house."

The door was now shut in the lad's face, and he had to prepare himself as best he might for another hour's wandering, when every step gave him pain. His clothes were damp, too, for it had begun to drizzle before he left the stationer's shop, and now it rained more heavily. It was a dreary march ; up and down in the pouring rain ; cold, hungry, alone, and in pain. This was Jem's condition, and it was one calculated to try the faith of a young Christian. It is hardly to be wondered at that

he felt 'miserable and desolate, for even those who are older than this poor lad was, often find their strength is but weakness, and their faith insufficient, when any great demand is made upon either. And yet I do believe that if we show want of faith, even in little things, our consciences must rebuke us afterwards, when God's gracious dealings with us prove that we were not forgotten, only tried for a short season. James experienced the truth of this. As he continued his weary walk in the rain, not daring to go many yards from the relieving officer's door, lest he should miss seeing him, Jem repeatedly passed the window of a dwelling close by, and as often as he came up to it he could not help glancing into the room. Though it was growing dark, the shutters were not closed, and through the short curtain the lad could see the blaze of a bright fire—so bright that it made the crimson paper on the walls glow, and the bright-hued curtains shed a rosy color very pleasant to behold if a person were feeling as well as seeing these comforts. But to the weary lad the contrast between his own position and

that of the inmates only made the misery of the former still more apparent. As he passed again he could perceive an old lady and two or three children at tea, and he could even hear the sound of their voices and merry laughter.

In spite of his own wretched plight the lad could not help passing the house rather more frequently perhaps than was needful; for to its other attractions was added that of a little curly head peeping over the short curtain. James saw the servant approach the window as if to draw down the blind; but the little one, he thought, begged for it to remain as it was, that he might look at the passers-by in the dim street, and observe the rain pattering upon the window-pane. Perhaps the child enjoyed the warm fireside and cheerful room the more when he saw how bleak and cold it was out of doors. But little curly-head had sharp eyes, and he was not long before he spied out poor Jem tramping up and down in the rain. Next came the other children to look at him; and finally the old lady herself, spectacles on nose, approached the window

and tried to distinguish what sort of a form it was that passed and repassed with that slow and limping gait. That, however, was too much for the lady's eyesight; and when James next approached the window little curly-head's fingers drummed upon the pane to attract his attention, and from the doorway a neat servant said, "Stop, if you please; my mistress wants to speak to you."

James stopped very willingly, and then the old lady came and surveyed him through her spectacles. "Only a boy," said she, as if speaking to herself. "And he is a sailor, too, poor fellow! Come in, my lad."

James could hardly think that these words were addressed to him, and he did not at once obey. "I am very wet, ma'am," said he; "not fit to come into your clean passage with these dirty shoes. Besides, I am waiting to see the relieving officer who lives near here, and if I miss him I may have to spend the whole night in the streets."

"Poor lad! Come in, I tell you. Alfred and Maggie, my little grandchildren, shall watch from the window for the person you

want. He cannot enter his own house without being seen from ours if the little ones look out."

James scraped and scrubbed at his shoes, in order to take as little mud as possible into that spotless passage, until the old lady was almost out of patience, and he was obliged to desist. At her request he followed the servant into a kitchen, as cozy in its way as the room he had so much admired. "You are waiting to get a night's lodging, are you?" said the old lady. "Have you had any tea? Because very likely you will not get that."

Jem answered "Yes" to the first question, and "No" to the second.

Without waiting for any further information the old lady bade the servant fetch the tea-things out of the room. More tea was put into the teapot, a plate of cold meat set on the table, and then again the old lady bade Jem help himself and make a good tea. Leaving curly-head—who had abandoned the office of watch at the window to his elder brother in order that he might have a look at Jem—in the kitchen, the old lady went back into the

room, and our poor wayfarer thankfully did as he was told, after having first asked a blessing on the food thus mercifully provided for him by this good Samaritan. And but a few minutes before, and in spite of such recent instances of favor and Divine protection amid great peril, he had been ready to think himself forsaken and forgotten!

Very thankfully did Jem partake of the food and warm himself by the bright kitchen fire, and often did curly-head—messenger between his grandmamma and James—press him again and again to eat. When he had finished, the old lady came herself, and in answer to her inquiries, he told how it happened that he was in such a plight. “And,” he continued, while the tears stood in his eyes, “I don’t know how to thank you for your kindness. Surely God must have put it into your heart, ma’am, to be so good to me.”

“No doubt, my boy, no doubt he moves us to pity those who need our aid. And,” added the old lady very softly, and in a trembling voice, “I have a son at sea now: he is the father of those children. But you told me

you had hurt yourself when you fell, and you walked quite lame. May-be we could do something to relieve the pain if you will let us try."

James had not yet seen the injured leg; but at the old lady's request he tried to remove his stocking. He could not do it, however, until the part was bathed with warm water; and when it was exposed to view, the children hid their faces after one hasty glance, and the kind old lady exclaimed, "Poor boy! poor boy!" while the tears ran down her cheeks. As for curly-head, he fairly sobbed to see the leg so badly cut and bruised.

"I can put something on this to do it good," said the old lady; "but it will smart, I am afraid. Will you try to bear present pain for future healing? I would spare you that if I knew how."

Much moved by such gentle words, James said he would try; and then the old lady with her own gentle hands applied something to the hurt. James did try to bear the pain bravely. He grasped the chair with both hands and bit his lip to suppress the rising

cry of pain. But it proved too much for his strength, though not for his fortitude. He did not cry out, but he fainted, and thus became, for a time, insensible both to suffering and kindness.

There was anxious bustling to and fro for a little while, and in a few minutes James opened his eyes. In addition to those who were near him when he became insensible, he now saw a gentleman standing by. This was the relieving officer, who had been seen from the window by the little sentinel, and afterwards called in by the servant.

The old lady and the gentleman had some talk about James, and at length it was decided that the poor lad was not in a fit state to be sent to one of the ordinary lodging-houses, and among a people who made a trade of begging. James could not hear all that was said, though he distinguished the word "hospital," and guessed that the kind old lady wished him to be taken to it. She had her way. The relieving officer went out again, and after being absent a short time he returned, and the lad was conveyed to the hospital,

where his injured leg was properly attended to. The gentle-handed young man who dressed it told James he need be under no apprehension about the hurt. Two or three days' rest and proper attention would make him all right again, and then he would be able to travel home.

James thanked the young surgeon with a trembling voice, and told him he felt, oh ! so comfortable. Well he might, for his wet clothes were gone, and he was lying in a clean bed, while the pain in the injured limb was wonderfully lessened by the dressing; and now the principal want was that of sleep. He did not want it long, for the young surgeon happening to glance at him as he passed down the room a few minutes after, saw that he had fallen into a sound slumber.





CHAPTER VII.

GLAD TIDINGS—A MEETING AND A PARTING.

“My son was dead and is alive again.” “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.”



Far away at Beachley, by Mr. Benton's fireside, sat Mrs. Morrison a sorrowing mother. She thought herself bereaved of her son. A letter had arrived that morning from Chapman, the master of the *Sea-Gull*. It was to Mr. Benton; but it told how Chapman had sent the boys in a boat, had since learned that they left the landing-place much later than they ought to have done, owing to Collins, who stayed drinking, and that they must have been lost—drowned during the storm.

Which of us can picture Mrs. Morrison's grief? Only a bereaved mother, or such a one as the widow of Nain, on whom our Lord himself had compassion, "and said unto her, Weep not." And Mrs. Morrison was in exactly the same position as she was, for James, too, "was the only son of his mother, and she was a widow."

There was mercy in store for her still, though she knew it not. James' letter was even then on its way with the glad tidings of his wonderful escape; but in the meanwhile the mother mourned.

"It is so very hard, sir," said she, bitterly sobbing, when Mr. Benton strove to console her. "He was all I had left, and to think that he should be lost in such an awful manner. Poor lad! I believe he tried to be ready; but it was indeed a sudden summons. It is hard to lay those we love in the ground when we have done our best to make their last hours happy by our love and care; but it is worse still to think they should meet death in such a shape as Jem has done. His father rests in Haredale churchyard; but my poor

lad's body is tossed about at the mercy of the winds and waters."

A burst of tears followed these words, and for the time Mrs. Morrison "would not be comforted."

Mr. Warren had broken the sorrowful tidings to the widow, because Mr. Benton, finding himself unequal to the task, had asked her former pastor to perform it. Now the kind minister, while feeling deeply for his old parishioner's new trial, still strove to comfort her. He reminded her of her own words, and that though she had spoken of James as *lost*, she must have done so in forgetfulness of the fact that our dead only *go before* us. "And you say, my friend, that it is hard to think of *him* as tossed about by the winds and waves; but have you forgotten that the better part is not there? Moreover, as surely as those dead arise who are laid to rest in quiet country graveyards, under the flowery grass and beneath the shade of pleasant trees, so also will those rise again over whom the sacred words of our beautiful service were never read. Land and sea alike must give up their dead, and

“Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.”

“I know it, sir ; I feel it,” said Mrs. Morrison ; but yet she wept, for still she was in the state which she had herself described. She could only see her own sorrow and her own loss. Mr. Warren said all that he could to comfort her ; but he could not chide her for grief which was only natural. So, having commended her to God, he left her, and returned to Haredale, where the tidings of James’ supposed death were received with regret by all at the parsonage.

It was perhaps well for Mrs. Morrison that during this period of trouble, though it proved only a short one, she was much engaged in attending to Old Isaac. For some months past the aged cripple had become gradually more and more feeble ; and without complaining of pain, he would often remark that his time on earth was getting short. When James went away, the old man had told him that he would find the easy-chair and the little ground-floor bedroom empty one of these days when he came home from a fishing voyage. And

now, when that sad letter arrived from Chapman, Old Isaac's easy-chair *was* vacant, for he was too weak to sit up, except just for a little, while his bed was made. The doctor, who had been called in, told Mr. Benton that poor Isaac's only disease was that of old age, and *it* was beyond his skill to alter. So all that could be done was to tend the old man carefully and kindly, and to tempt his failing appetite with little niceties of the most nourishing kind.

How kindly and tenderly Mrs. Morrison waited upon him; and Mr. Benton performed a son's part to his aged friend. He would have persuaded Mrs. Morrison to engage a nurse in addition; but this she would not consent to, though Isaac's growing helplessness caused her increased labor. Both the widow and Mr. Benton felt afraid to tell the old man the sorrowful news about the loss of the boat and its crew, as they knew what a blow it would be to him. But dim as were those aged eyes, too dim now to read the precious promises contained in Holy Writ, Old Isaac could discern the traces of deep and terrible

suffering which *would* show themselves in the face, and even the movements, of his kind nurse.

“What is it?” he asked. “Tell me what this trouble is, good friend.” He laid his withered hand upon Mrs. Morrison’s as he added, “But, instead of telling me, it will be better to tell Jesus.”

Mrs. Morrison’s tears fell fast, and in spite of all her efforts, the sound of her sobs reached the old man’s ears. He raised himself up, after more than one trial, and spoke again.

“I can’t kneel,” said he, “but I can pray God to comfort you, for I know it is some great trouble that makes you sob so bitterly. Surely the lad has not done anything wrong.”

“No, not that, not that. My poor James, my dear good lad. O Isaac, I find no words in all the Bible that come into my mind like those of King David: ‘Would God I had died for thee, O my son, my son!’”

“Dead!” cried Old Isaac. “What! the old withered trunk has still its roots in the

ground, and the young shoot, so fresh and strong, is fallen! O mistress, you can't mean that!"

The mother's tears fell faster, and the old man, scarcely less grieved than herself, dropped back upon his pillow and wept also. This roused Mrs. Morrison to a feeling of uneasiness about Isaac. She was afraid that this agitation would be too much for his feeble frame to bear, and she began to say, as well as her tears would allow her, "I'm so sorry I told you, Isaac; but oh, my heart was so full! Don't, please; don't fret about it, for that will do you harm."

But Old Isaac could not help grieving; and now that he knew this much, Mrs. Morrison was obliged to tell him all that Chapman's letter contained. If they could but have known that, while they were mingling their tears together, James was sleeping quietly in the hospital bed, and that his letter was even then speeding on its way to tell them that he was still alive, and only three hundred miles away—a mere nothing in railway days.

It was fortunate for Mrs. Morrison that she

did not answer the door when the postman's double rap was heard on the following day in the afternoon. To her the sound of his knock seemed like a death-knell; for had it not been the forerunner of *that* letter? She started and turned pale when she heard it, and Mr. Benton kindly went to the door himself. What a surprise awaited him! He could scarcely believe his eyes when he read the address of this new epistle. It was for Mrs. Morrison; and he well knew James' handwriting; it must be from her son. He had found it difficult to break to her the news of a great sorrow, and now, knowing how hopeless she was, he hesitated as to the best means of telling her of this great joy. One thing he felt sure he should not do. He should not delay telling her the good news, as had been the case when that sad intelligence came from the master of the *Sea-Gull*.

Mr. Benton considered a moment, and then went into Old Isaac's room where Mrs. Morrison was. She looked up as he entered, and when she caught sight of his face she read there a new expression. "What could it

mean?" she asked herself, but she could not speak aloud.

"The postman has brought a letter, Mrs. Morrison, but it is not for me. It is for you, I fancy."

She looked eagerly and her lips parted. She dared not, could not say that she only had one to write letters to her, and now he was gone.

"Listen," said Mr. Benton, still holding the letter in his hand: "I want you to think of some Scripture words, and try to think them real even in your case. 'Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.' O Mrs. Morrison, can you bear a great joy to come close on the heels of a great sorrow?"

She dropped upon the side of the bed, her whole frame trembling, and with a sudden movement she held out her hand for the letter. As soon as she caught sight of the handwriting, she cried aloud, "It is from my boy, my dear James: 'He was dead, and is alive again; was lost, and is found.'"

And before she read the precious assurance to the end,

the now happy mother fell upon her knees, and in an unbroken voice offered unto God her sacrifice of thanksgiving, in which she was heartily joined both by Mr. Benton and Old Isaac. This second letter had indeed "caused the widow's heart to sing for joy," and her happiness found vent as she said, "Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing. Thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness; to the end that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O Lord, my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever."

After this first joyous outburst of thanksgiving, James' letter was read through. To be sure, it told that he had just been robbed of the money which the kindness of the captain and sailors had provided for his expenses, and that he was thus left penniless in a strange place. But this seemed such a light matter in comparison with his late narrow escape from death, that it hardly caused Mrs. Morrison a moment's uneasiness. "I cannot doubt," said she, "that my lad will be cared for even in this difficulty. At worst it will not last long."

"No," replied Mr. Benton; "I will write directly, and send him money to bring him home. He says, 'Address to me at the post-office,' doesn't he?"

Yes, that was the address; and soon the letter was written and posted. There were happy hearts under Mr. Benton's roof that night.

Old Isaac also seemed to rally a little amid the general rejoicing, and said, "I believe I shall be spared to see the lad again before my eyes are closed against earthly things, though I feel that my days are numbered."

One more letter came from James. It was written in the hospital, and told them of the old lady's kindness, of his admission to that place, and the care bestowed upon him there. He also said that the money had arrived, thanks to Mr. Benton, and that on the next day he hoped to start for home. "I should like to *come* at once, dear mother," he added, "instead of sending you this letter; but the doctor says, 'Much better give your leg another day's rest.'"

"Dear mother, I can just imagine what you

would feel when you thought I was drowned. I do believe that at that terrible time, when death was so very close, I dreaded it almost as much on your account as my own. And how I did think of what you taught me when I was a little fellow about being ready, since the summons must come to both young and old sooner or later. And amid it all, mother, the stormy wind, the raging sea, the lightning darting overhead, and sound of the thunder rolling in my ears, I thought with joy that though my body might be swallowed up by the waters, even it should 'rise again incorruptible.' O mother, I do so often think to myself how wonderful that is! But it must be true, because God's word tells us many times over that it will be. 'For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.'

"I thought of those words, mother, when I was in the boat; and just what Job said about the worms, did I know would be the same with regard to the creatures that live in the deep.

"You see I have time to write you a long

letter, for I am obliged to keep my leg up, and, as I may not walk about, I must either read or write. Tell Mr. Warren that the little Bible he gave me has never been out of my possession. I had it in the boat that night; I have it now. It has been wet with salt water more than once.

“I am grieved to hear that dear Old Isaac is so very weak now. I do hope he will be spared till I come home again. I feel grateful, so grateful to him—the dear old man! How kind he was to me when I was a poor little lad! I used sometimes to wonder how he could feel so thankful when he was poor and crippled in Haredale workhouse. And he made me see that the very thing which had made him a cripple, was one of God’s mercies for which he had thanked his heavenly Father many a time after he had learned to understand it in that light.

“What a long letter I am writing! But my heart is full of thoughts of you, dear mother, and of those who have shown me kindness at Haredale and Beachley.

“Kindest love to you, dear mother, also to

Isaac and Mr. Benton. I am thinking this is a selfish letter ; for I have said so little about poor Frank and Collins, who must have met with the awful death that I escaped so wonderfully. I feel almost glad that Frank had no mother ; for you know what it would have been for her to hear what you heard and believed to be true about me.

“I must conclude my letter now. To-morrow morning very early, if all be well, I hope to start, and to reach Beachley late at night ; and when we meet, I don’t know which of us will feel most thankful, you or, dear mother,

“Your affectionate son,

“JAMES MORRISON.”

James was not long in following his letter. He set out at the appointed time, and arrived in safety. Mr. Benton met him at the station and took him home in a cab, that his leg might not be injured by walking upon it too far at first. “My son, my dear son !” was all that his mother could say ; and any language that I could use would fail to describe her happiness when she once more had Jem’s arms round her neck and felt his kiss upon

her cheek. Then there was Old Isaac to meet, too, and he lifted up his feeble voice in thankfulness when his withered hand was clasped in the rough palms of the fisher-lad. "The little room is not empty yet, you see, Jem," said the old man. "I am spared to welcome you back again; but I think it will be the last time you will come home from a voyage and find Old Isaac."

Jem's leg was so far better that he could walk a little, but still it required rest and attention. Mr. Benton therefore kindly asked him to stay under his own roof; for who could care for him like his mother? Besides, Jem's master wished to let Mrs. Morrison and her son be together. He knew that no company could be so sweet to her as that of her dutiful lad; and it was only natural that such should be her feeling. Mr. Benton wished also to show his sense of the value of Mrs. Morrison's services in his house; for by her orderly habits and economy she saved him expense, while by little, thoughtful kindnesses she promoted his comfort. He therefore strove to reward her through her son, and James was

allowed privileges which few lads in his position ever enjoy.

"You have two people to nurse now," said Mr. Benton to Mrs. Morrison. "Poor Isaac grows weaker, and your boy must be looked after. You will really need help in the household work."

"Jem will help me to wait on Isaac, sir," she replied. "Thank God, the lad will do very well with very little besides rest, and he can sit beside Isaac and attend to him while I am busy. There will be no more work on my hands, but less if anything, now Jem has come."

Mr. Benton was not exactly convinced; but seeing that his housekeeper was so anxious to perform her part unaided, he was obliged to yield. It was a sweet sight to see the lad in all the vigor of youth, his cheeks glowing with health, and his whole frame seeming to promise a noble manhood, setting aside the very signs of his strength to minister to the old man's comfort. He hushed his clear, loud voice to softness, lest it should disturb the invalid, and his ringing laugh was not heard

in the sick-room. In place of these, he would read from that large-print Bible which poor Old Isaac could now no longer see, and his clear, low tones sounded pleasantly in the invalid's ear as he lay listening, with eyes closed and hands clasped, to the Word of Life.

Sometimes the lad put forth his strength, even there, and twining his strong arms round Old Isaac, he raised him up to a sitting posture, and propped him with pillows. But then and always his touch was as gentle as that of a woman ; his attentions such as the love of Christ constraineth those who are his disciples to offer one to another.

And what can be more beautiful than to see the young Christian, full of freshness and vigor, both of mind and body, thus ministering to the wants of an aged brother in the faith, and proving by deeds of love that they are united by the same holy bond? Oh, dear children, and ye of riper age also, when you are tempted to speak angry and taunting words, or to neglect those little kindnesses which are in the power of the very poorest, think that by these things you prove that you

cannot be the disciple of Christ if you wilfully fail in observing the command, "Love one another."

Jem's leg grew quite strong; and even before that the *Sea-Gull* arrived at Beachley, and its master, Chapman, had met the boy whom he had supposed to be drowned. No wonder Mrs. Morrison shuddered when she thought of Jem's past danger, and dreaded the idea of his being again exposed to similar ones. She said this to Mr. Warren when he came to Beachley to pay Old Isaac a visit. The good minister smiled in an encouraging manner. "I should have thought, my friend," said he, "that your lad's recent escape would have strengthened your faith in the protecting care of our heavenly Father, and made you, instead of dreading, take courage to trust him more entirely for the future."

"Ah, sir," replied Mrs. Morrison, "I ought to be able to give my boy entirely into the Lord's hands."

Jem, of course, expected to leave Beachley when the *Sea-Gull* went out again, and was both ready and willing to perform his duties.

But the night before that on which the little vessel was to sail, Old Isaac said to Mr. Benton, "I must say I shall feel it a trial to part with the lad, Jack. He is a wonderful comfort to me; and though you and Mrs. Morrison are so kind and careful that I should want for nothing, still I shall miss him sorely. The sight of his fresh, happy face, and the sound of his cheerful voice, are among the greatest pleasures earth has left for me. You see," added the old man, as though he feared that Mr. Benton might think him ungrateful—"you see I have a place in my heart for you which nobody else could fill now, and I have one for the lad's mother, and another for Jem himself. When you three are here there is no blank at all; but, if either goes away, nobody else could fill up the empty place to Old Isaac. You know what I mean, and if you don't know something else, I feel it, and that is, that Jem and I will not meet again on this side the grave. It's a solemn thing, isn't it now, Jack, to feel that we are saying good-by to a person we love, and that we shall never see him again until we stand together, cloth-

ed in our risen bodies, 'before the judgment-seat of Christ'?"

"I understand you, Isaac," said Mr. Benton. "You would fain keep the lad beside you till—till—"

"Until the old man starts upon his last journey," said Isaac, finishing the sentence which his friend had left incomplete.

"Or until you are better," was the reply.

"I shall never be that in the way you mean it, Jack. Old age is a disease which beats the doctor's skill to cure. Thank you, though, for letting the lad stay with me. If it should happen that I am spared longer than I now expect to be, I wont ask you to leave the lad on shore when the *Sea-Gull* goes on the next voyage."

"It shall be as you like, Isaac. If he is a comfort to you, let him stay. It must not be that I deprive you of any pleasure, for my great wish is to make you comfortable while I have you under my roof."

"You have done it, Jack. Dear, kind Jack, you have been as a son to a childless old cripple, who now prays with all his heart that

the blessing of the Most High may reward you a hundred-fold."

Thus it happened that the *Sea-Gull* went without Jem that time, and the lad remained by his aged friend's side to watch, to tend, and to comfort him. It was not for long that his services were needed. Every hour seemed to bring a change; but so gradual was the old man's decline, that his watchful nurse, and those who were with her, could hardly tell in what way he seemed weaker, only they knew it was so.

The *Sea-Gull* had been three days gone. It was in the afternoon, and the rays of the declining sun shone into Old Isaac's room. As they rested on his snowy hair they made it look almost like silver; but the paleness of his face showed all the more plainly in the bright light, while the gleam only increased the appearance of glowing health visible in the cheeks of the rosy fisher-lad, who sat by his side reading aloud. Jem had chosen the twenty-third Psalm, and as he got to the words, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no

evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me," Isaac repeated them after him with a firm voice. "The words are real, lad," said he; "they have life in them; they give life to me."

James paused at the end of the psalm, and glancing at the old man's face, he saw something which made him rise hastily and call his mother and Mr. Benton. These required no second summons, and in a moment they stood by his bed.

"All here!" exclaimed Isaac. "I am glad, for I have a word or two to say. First, to thank you all. He will reward you—He, 'who is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love,' when we all stand together in that other place. Jack, you have the prayers and blessing of a dying man, who hopes that you will some day receive from children of your own such measure as you have measured withal. Jem, you must go on as you have begun. You have started in God's service; may you have grace to endure unto the end. Be dutiful to your mother, lad, and remember the promise. How can you tell but what you

were saved yon stormy night because God has said, 'Honor thy father and thy mother, and thy days shall be long in the land'? You have tried to obey that commandment, and God never forgets what he promises. Mrs. Morrison, you will think of me too as an old friend gone before, but, thanks be to God, not lost, not lost."

The old man's voice failed him; he was obliged to stop, and Jem hastened to lift a little wine to his lips. This revived him a little, and he turned and held out his hand to Mr. Benton, while a happy smile, which looked like a gleam of winter sunshine reflected from an old tree trunk, played around his lips. Mr. Benton pressed the withered hand in his, and Old Isaac laid the other upon the head of Jem Morrison, who had dropped on his knees by the side of the bed, and was sobbing audibly. Mrs. Morrison, too, was weeping silently, and down Mr. Benton's cheeks the tears began to steal also.

The face of the dying man alone had in it no sign of pain or sorrow, and he gently said, "This is my time for rejoicing. Death will

soon be over, and then life eternal. Which of you will read to me? I have a great wish to hear the words of the Burial Service once more."

Jem looked up surprised, but Old Isaac had never asked in vain; and though the lad had to struggle hard in order to silence his sobs, he at length succeeded; and in a low and solemn voice began to read, "I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

"Hear that now," said Old Isaac. "It is not death that is coming upon me, but life, life eternal."

James read on until he came to the sublime chapter which the great apostle of the Gentiles wrote about the rising again of our bodies from the dead. How the old man's face lighted up as the wondrous words fell upon his ears! When James, who now read in a steady voice, and forgot his tears in the solemn subject which engaged his lips and tongue—when, I say, James repeated the sentence,

"The dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed," Old Isaac said, as he held out his hand, "O Jack, is n't it wonderful, now, to think that such a worn shell as this body of mine should be cast into the earth to be the seed of another that shall die no more?"

The old man then listened until James finished reading the chapter from Corinthians, and then he said, "That will do, dear lad; I can remember what comes next."

So, with closed eyes and clasped hands, the old man lay, while those who looked on rejoiced amid their weeping, to see how calmly the aged Christian waited for death. Often they moistened his lips with wine, and received his feeble thanks; but at times his mind wandered, and they heard him name people, old friends at Haredale, long since dead; or at others he murmured favorite verses from Holy Writ, showing his confidence in God. The evening light faded away, and night came on. For a little time the old man slept, and then, awakening suddenly, he asked to be lifted up. Mr. Benton and James both

passed their arms around him, and, turning to them, he said, "Thank you, dear Jack. Jem, I am glad you are here. I cannot see any of you now, but I feel your kind hands. We shall meet, but we shall all be changed. Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." And so, with that holy name upon his lips, Old Isaac died. As Mr. Benton reverently closed his eyes, he added one more sentence from the Holy Book: "I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, From henceforth blessed are the dead which die in the Lord: even so saith the Spirit; for they rest from their labors."

Three days afterwards, the mortal remains of Old Isaac were borne to their last resting-place, beneath the shadow of the old gray church at Haredale, there to await the sound of that last trumpet. There was genuine sorrow in the hearts of those three mourners who stood by the old man's grave, but they did not sorrow "as others which have no hope."



CHAPTER VIII.

A MISSION OF DANGER AND ITS ENDING.

“Send Thine hand from above ; aid me and deliver me out of great waters.”

JAMES MORRISON was in his sixteenth year when Old Isaac died, and from that time until he was nearly nineteen, he went on steadily doing his duty to his earthly master. The remembrance of the aged cripple's deathbed had made a very great impression on James, and served to deepen those impressions which his good mother had always so carefully striven to make upon his mind while he was yet a child. Thus, as he increased in stature, his store of heavenly wisdom increased also.

Hitherto James had not been able to save

much towards executing his cherished project, but he knew that under Mr. Benton's roof his mother had found a home for years. This was a cause of great thankfulness; yet still, out of his little wages as an apprentice, he had managed to save something, and various presents from his master had served to increase the hoard. Perhaps a reader might wonder why James should feel anxious to prepare a home for his mother, when she was so comfortable and happy as Mr. Benton's housekeeper. Ah! but James knew a secret, or, at least, he felt pretty sure that, at no distant time, Mr. Benton would take another housekeeper in his mother's place; but not as she was either. It would be a fair young woman, who would bear his name, and whom he would take "for better for worse, for richer for poorer," never to part until death should divide the twain. And Mrs. Morrison knew that Mr. Benton looked forward to bringing home a wife; and without any selfish thought, but with a hearty prayer for the happiness of him who had been so good to her and her son, she prepared herself for the coming change; of

which, however, her master had not yet spoken to her.

Like James, she had been very careful of her earnings, and during five years had saved a nice little sum also; and now the young man was just out of his apprenticeship, so that he would gain the same wages as any other grown-up sailor. Thus, when the time should come for Mrs. Morrison to leave Mr. Benton's roof, there was every reason to hope that the desire of James' heart would be fulfilled, and that he would have the happiness of seeing his good mother the mistress of a little home of her own, in which he could render to her all the love and honor she so well deserved at his hands.

It was in the latter part of the month of February, when the *Sea-Gull* came into Beachley with a cargo of fish, and James first received the wages of a grown-up man. Immediately after the arrival of the vessel, Mr. Benton went to London on business connected with the fishery, and with him he took Chapman, the master of the *Sea-Gull*. There had been boisterous weather during the last

fortnight, and the little vessel required some repairs; so, while these were in progress, its owner and master made a trip to the great city, leaving James to look after the work that was going on, and to report what was done to Mr. Benton by letter.

Mrs. Morrison was very glad that circumstances obliged her son to remain at Beachley for a few days, because, in spite of her trust in God's infinite mercy, and the belief that a widow's prayers would not be unheeded or unanswered, the mother's heart would throb anxiously, and her eyes be filled with tears, when the stormy wind drove the hail against the window-pane, or roared in the chimney. At such times she recalled that fearful night, when James and his two companions were tossed for hours by the tempest, and only one, saved almost by a miracle, survived to tell the tale. True, it was *her* son; and then, as she remembered this, fear would give place to thankfulness, and, fulfilling the Saviour's command, as delivered by the mouth of Peter, who, by the Divine inspiration had been made a fisher of men, she cast all her care

upon the Lord, believing that he cared for her.

Perhaps Mrs. Morrison had never rejoiced so much in the thought of her son's presence at home as she did on that February night, the first after her master's departure for London. As she lay in bed, she heard the wind gradually rising to a stormy height, and was thankful that James was sleeping in peace and safety in that room below, which used to be Old Isaac's, but which had of late been her son's resting-place when at Beachley.

But James was not asleep. Like his mother, he was kept awake by the sound of the wind, and lay listening and thinking of those at sea, exposed to such a storm. He rose with the dawn, intending to go down to the shore, and see if he could be of any service; for, from the number of vessels off that coast on the preceding evening, he feared that some would be driven aground on those sunken rocks which form a "bar" to Beachley harbor. James moved about very softly, not wishing to disturb his mother; but her watchful ears had caught the sound when he open-

ed his bedroom door, and in a moment she called his name.

“O mother,” said James, “are you awake too? I have not been able to sleep for hours past, so I thought I would run down to the beach, and see what is going on there. I’m afraid strong arms and stout hearts will be wanted there if this wind lasts.” James ended with a cheery good morning, and his hand was on the street-door lock when his mother called out, “Stop a moment, James.”

His mother’s simplest request, uttered in the gentlest tone, was always enough. Though anxious to go, he waited as she wished, until she joined him. To his great surprise, she appeared with her bonnet and warm rug shawl in her hand, and said, “I will go down to the beach too, my dear.”

“Dear mother, you don’t consider,” replied the young man. “The wind will almost take you off your feet. It is not fit for a woman to fight against.”

“The wind will not take me off my feet while I have my son’s arm to lean upon, will it, think you, James?”

"No, mother; but it may be that—"

He stopped and looked wistfully in her face, as though asking her to understand that he might have to leave her *without* the support of his strong arm for a time.

"Ay, my boy. I see how it is," said she. "You are thinking that you may find other work for your willing hands and strong arms than just using one of them as a prop for your mother."

She did not speak reproachfully, though the words might have seemed to convey a sort of half-reproof if it had not been for the look of affection which went with them. Quick came his answer, "Mother, I never rejoice so much in my strength as I do when I am using it for you, whether for your present or future comfort."

"I believe you, dear lad, I believe you," she answered, and throwing her arms round his neck she kissed his ruddy cheek, leaving it wet with the glad tears which ran down her own.

James returned her caress right heartily. He was not like some foolish youths, who are

ashamed to show those pure and holy affections that are intended to grow with our growth, and which, though planted in our hearts from the moment that we become "living souls," ought not to decay, but rather to attain their full perfection in riper age. James did not think it unmanly to be tender and loving to his mother. He had often been laughed at, both as boy and man, for caring so very much about his mother, and for denying himself the society and sports suitable to his age, in order that he might gladden her eyes and heart with his presence. But in the sight of her beaming face when she saw him in the doorway, in the knowledge that his self-denial made her happy, and above all, in the approval of his own conscience, James had his reward. So, by degrees, it required no self-denial. The habit of thinking first of his mother became so strong that it required no effort, and now in all the strength of manhood he yet delighted to bend his strength before her weakness, and thus "honor his mother."

Thus it was on that stormy February morn-

ing. While really anxious to go down to the beach, James waited at his mother's command, and after she had withdrawn her arms from his neck and wiped the moisture from her eyes, she repeated her request.

"My dear boy," said she, "I can read your heart, I know. You want to be down yonder; but if you are to be of use you must not go out fasting. Stay a few minutes, and you will go twice the man you are now, and a mother's prayers and blessings shall go with you too."

With rapid steps the widow went to and fro. While she was speaking she lighted the fire which was laid ready, and in a very little time, with James' help, a comfortable breakfast was prepared.

"Now eat, James," said she. "Food will give you strength, and fit you for exertion, if you are called on to use it."

James felt the wisdom of his mother's advice. The two breakfasted together, though the mother partook of but little. When James rose she said, "One thing more, James."

He knew what she meant. It was that, according to custom, they should kneel and join in praise and prayer together. This they did, and as they rose Mrs. Morrison said, "Now, my son, we have had food both for soul and body, *you* shall go, and *I* will try to give you into God's hands. But I must walk to the beach with you. If there should be a chance of saving life, I know where you will be, James; and it would be easier for me to see real danger than to sit here imagining what *may* be."

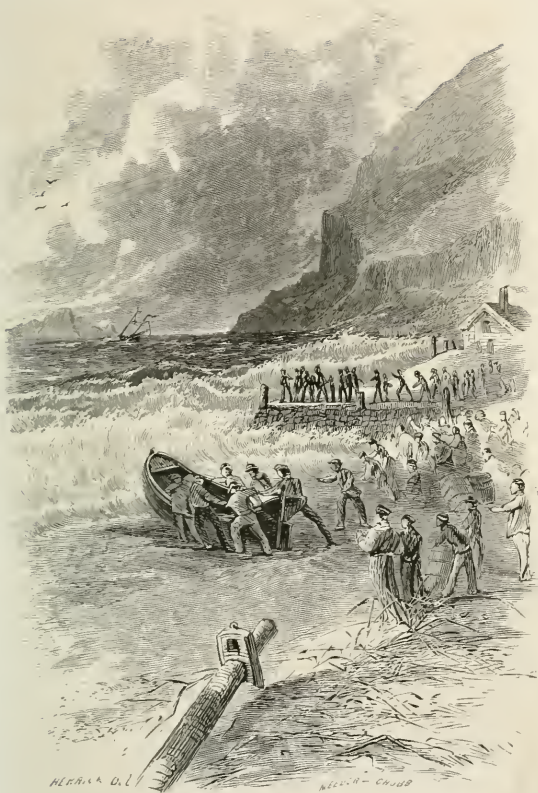
James said no more to prevent his mother from going with him, but when she was well wrapped up he locked the door, drew her arm within his, and they hastened down to the beach together. When they reached it, they found many people already there, and all eyes were fixed upon one object. This was a schooner which had run aground. The crew, consisting of several men, were making signals of distress, and all the anxious watchers on the land saw that unless aid could be procured their lives must be lost. But there *were* brave hearts and willing

hands ready to do their utmost, and the united force of many men was employed in launching a boat into the angry surf. As soon as it was afloat there were volunteers in plenty, and five men—men with wives and little children—leaped into it. James had aided in pushing the boat off, and a glance told him that another pair of hands would be needed. In an instant he sprang to his mother's side, and said, "Mother, send me with a blessing." "Go, my son," was her reply, "and may He who created the winds and waves restore you to me in safety."

He needed no second bidding. With a word of thanks to his mother, and a look of love, he sprang from her side again and leaped into the boat. "You can do with another pair of hands; mates," cried he, "and mine are strong and willing." "And welcome," added a voice in the boat. "Now, men, give way."

A cheer broke from the assembled crowd on the beach and pier, as the men, by their united strength, sent the boat through the waters. After that cheer died away, no one

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seemed able to speak much, but watched in breathless silence, as the boat, now lifted high on the crest of the wave, and again sinking into the hollow between that and another water-mountain, slowly neared the vessel. It was hard work for the rowers, but they bent their whole powers to the task, feeling that they should be only too well rewarded if it should please God to make them the instruments of saving life. And as they were all men who had spent the greater part of their own days upon the deep, they knew they were striving to do for others such service as they also might need while engaged in their usual employment. If their strength should be spent in vain, they resolved it should not be for want of trying to bring about a different ending.

But their efforts were not in vain. They neared the fated vessel, and succeeded in getting her crew, one by one, into the boat. As the last man joined his comrades, the people on the shore, as if their voices were released from the spell in which their anxious watching had bound them burst into another

hearty cheer. Then, appearing to remember though the men were in the boat they were not yet safe, they again became hushed and silent. At this time, too, their attention was drawn to another vessel which was likely to be driven on shore, and a cry arose, "Get out the life-boat! The gale increases every moment, and no common boat must go out again in such a sea."

No time was lost in acting upon this, and just as James Morrison and his brave companions came to land with the six rescued sailors, the life-boat touched the water. Who wonders that Mrs. Morrison, with streaming eyes and rejoicing heart, was among those who crowded round the saved and their preservers.

James' face was glowing with delight. "Mother, aren't you glad I came to the beach?" he whispered.

She said she could not feel otherwise than glad, even though while he spoke she saw that he was busy adjusting a cork jacket, which showed that he hoped to make one among those who were going off on another

mission of mercy in the life-boat. "Thank you, mother, thank you. You always encourage me to act when you know it is right I should."

A touch of the hand, and he was gone. Out again on the waters, which were stormier than before; back again in an hour, with more seamen saved from death. Then there was a little, but a very little breathing time, and Jem's mother determined to go home to Mr. Benton's, and fetch refreshments for him. She knew that it would be useless to ask him to go with her when there was a prospect of his being wanted again. She almost seemed to fly on her errand, so anxious was she to return to the beach, and very soon she was there, not in time to speak to her son, but only to see him and his brave companions contending against the waves in order to rescue more lives. How they bent to their oars, straining every nerve! Driven back by the angry waters, they tried again and again. They reached one grounded vessel, saved its crew, then passed on to another; and yet more lives were given to reward their labors.

What a scene of excitement was that! The shore crowded with assembled thousands, from the early morning until afternoon, who forgot all but what was going on there. Food and home comforts were forgotten: their eyes were fixed now upon some fated vessel nearing the ground, now upon the life-boat made to struggle through the waters by her brave crew. Now all stood silent like a single man; and again, as with one voice, they broke into cheers and shouts of congratulation, while mingled sobs told what a stake *some* held in the precious living cargo of the life-boat. Sometimes, too, the great crowd would watch the boat nearing the shore, and then all would rush forward to aid its exhausted freight to land. No less than five crews were brought on shore in safety, and every man in the life-boat was rejoicing in the thought that he had been made the instrument of saving many lives, though they themselves were much exhausted with their great exertions in this noble cause.

James Morrison and his mother met again after the fifth crew had been safely landed,

for she struggled through the crowd to offer him food. Even while she spoke, one of his companions said, "Come, Jem, lad, there's more work to be done." And he cried, "I'm ready," in his cheery voice. "You will not stay me now, mother," said he; "there are more lives to save."

"But, my boy, you must be worn out; and, James, they say the life-boat will be of little use now the tide is up, while there is greater danger than ever for those who go in it. James, I can't feel that any saved life can be precious to me if I lose you. You are all I have."

"But, mother, the work is not finished. I feel strong, quite strong, in spite of all; and you made me so, for you took care that I had a warm, comfortable meal before I left home. Some of my mates have tasted nothing to-day, and they are so carried away by the wish to save others, that they forget themselves."

"Take this, then," said Mrs. Morrison, thrusting some bread and meat into her son's hand, "it will keep your strength up."

He took the food, but answered with a

smile, "We have other uses for our hands than to carry them to our mouths when we are out yonder, mother."

To satisfy her, however, James ate a mouthful or two, and then, hearing a voice call, "Morrison, where are you?" he rushed forward and joined his companions. Many of the lookers-on would have stayed the gallant fellows from risking their lives again; but they might as well have talked to the roaring wind, or bidden the angry waves be calm. So long as there was a chance of being of service, they were resolved to do what lay in the power of human strength to achieve. And so, while their wives, mothers, and even their children, stood looking on, the brave men once more left the shore, and pulled toward the stranded vessel. A sad foreboding filled the minds of the spectators when they saw how violently the waves were beating, and how dangerous must be the passage through them at the very best. Yet the boat neared the stranded vessel, though by slow degrees, because even the willing hands that manned it could not but feel the effects of

their long and severe labor. Alas! that such should be the end of all their toil! A great wave struck the boat, and in a moment the horror-stricken crowd on the beach saw the thirteen heroes—who had fought with the waters during all those long hours, and had wrested from them the prey which they were about to swallow—they who had saved so many lives—now struggling for their own. And of all the thousands who were looking on, and who could hear the cries of the poor men, not one could do anything to save. There they were, helpless, though so willing, and they had the terrible sight to witness of which I have told. They heard the wail of women who saw their husbands drowning, and the woful cry of children whose fathers would never again clasp them in their kindly arms, and they were forced to own themselves powerless to aid when God causeth his winds to blow and his waters to flow.

One by one the brave crew disappeared beneath the waters, amid the sound of weeping and hopeless wailing which rang through the crowd on the beach. Among those who were

bemoaning their beloved ones stood a woman in a mourning-dress—the kind she had worn for many a year past. It was Mrs. Morrison, who, when she saw the life-boat upset, cried out in bitter agony, “My son, my child is drowning! Why did I let him go!” She knew that an earnest beseeching word from her would have kept him by her side, and she had not said it. She had hardly realized the extent of the calamity which she deemed had fallen upon her, when a murmur ran through the excited, pitying throng, “There is one alive! He is struggling towards the shore!” Several rushed into the water to render aid, and some had nearly shared the fate of those who were drowned in their zeal to be of use to this sole survivor. There was a little rush to the spot where he was landed. Wives and mothers ran forward, each hoping it might be *her* husband or son, and then fell back in bitter disappointment, to renew their wailings for the dead. But there *was* a mother whose bleeding heart was healed by a single glance at the rescued man, and that mother was Mrs. Morrison. Once more, after mourn-

ing her son as dead, he was restored to her alive, the only survivor out of the thirteen heroes of that sad day. The men on board the vessel were afterwards saved by other means just before it became an entire wreck.

There were other Beachley men who, before night fell, copied the noble example of the brave dead, and risked their lives also in a like cause; but no more died at the post of danger.

That night, amid the voice of praise and thanksgiving for the infinite mercy shown unto herself and her son, Mrs. Morrison prayed, how fervently no words can tell, for those who were enduring the anguish which she had been spared.





CHAPTER IX.

HONOR TO THE BRAVE—JEM'S EARLY HOPES FULFILLED.

“And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ.”

“**M**OTHER,” said James, when he was able to talk with her, “I do believe that, if it had not been for you, I should have shared the fate of those poor fellows whose bodies are lying side by side yonder. It was my having had a good meal that gave me strength when others sank exhausted; for, do you know, some of them had never tasted food to-day? And yet how they worked! They were borne up by the desire to save human

lives. O mother, it is terrible to think that the brave men who toiled beside me, hour after hour, are all gone. And by what mercy I am spared!"

James covered his face with his hands; and his mother's sobs, partly caused by thankfulness for this great deliverance, partly by sorrow for the dead, were her only answer.

But Beachley people, while grieving for those who were gone, did not neglect the living. They thought of the poor women made widows, and the little children who had become orphans so sadly and suddenly; and they resolved that at least they should want for none of those comforts which the strong hands of the drowned men used to earn for them. So the rich men met together to consult what should be done, and they gladly gave out of their abundance. Others, whose means were less, gave in proportion to them, and the very poor added their mite also; but all gave willingly, for, apart from their deep sympathy with the bereaved, Beachley people were proud of their heroic townsmen, whose sacrifice of life in compliance with the sacred

calls of humanity was a more glorious instance of self-devotion than a hundred battle-fields could show. Among those who gave, perhaps none did so with greater willingness than did Mrs. Morrison. She said to herself, "God has been very gracious to me; and of all those whose kindred went out in the life-boat I am the only one who is not mourning the death of my nearest and dearest. Surely I owe a thank-offering to Him who has had mercy upon me and has redeemed His promise with regard to those who honor father and mother."

Acting upon this thought, Mrs. Morrison took three bright gold pieces from the savings of years, and sent them privately as "a thank-offering," for the use of bereaved widows, without even telling her son of her intention. But they were too much alike, this mother and son, for the good thought which had been so promptly acted upon in the one case to be wanting in the other breast. James, too, felt his heart overflowing with both thankful and compassionate feelings, and in like manner grateful and gentle thoughts proved the seeds of a good work. Again, like the good mother

who had trained him in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord," he wished to obey the command which says, "Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth." So he, too, visited his little hoard, gathered together for the sake of that dear mother, and, taking a portion from it, he sent his thank-offering.

Something of this spirit appeared to animate all Beachley at this sorrowful season. But it was by no means confined to that place, for the news of the calamity and the noble humanity which had led to it spread through the length and breadth of the land, and persons of all ranks and classes gladly asked to be allowed to join in paying a fitting tribute to the memory of the dead, by showing their care for the living who mourned their loss. Thus the rich sent large and others smaller sums from distant places, so that in a very few days those who had first asked help for the bereaved families were obliged to cry, "Enough." So, with many thanks, they now had to beg them to make an end of bringing, and to stay their hands, for plenty had been contributed to provide for all who.

through the loss of the boat, had a claim on Christian aid.

Among the many contributors to the fund were some who thought about him that was saved as well as of those who had died in that season of peril. These, when they sent money, had requested that the brave young man who shared in all the dangers of that terrible day should also share in their offerings of gratitude to the families of the drowned seamen of Beachley. Some, indeed, sent special contributions for James himself. When told of this, the young man could hardly believe it, and at once said that the money might go to the women and children. But he was soon assured that there was enough for them; and that even too much would have been given had not a check been placed on the willing generosity of English hearts. Thank God, they are ever ready to answer when a call is made on their humanity. The writer's heart swells within her, and her eyes fill with tears, when she thinks of the generosity of her countrymen. And while proud of her nationality, she prays, may God bless *them*, and make

them citizens of that eternal city, where He shall reign supreme, with the Lamb for the light thereof.

But the gifts sent for James were not the only acknowledgment he received. The Humane Society, ever ready to show that it understands and desires to mark that heroism which moves men to risk their own lives for the sake of their fellow-men, sent a medal to Beachley for James Morrison. The gentlemen who had the management of the money contributed, put that portion of it which was for James into a neat purse, and invited him to attend on a particular day to receive both it and the medal. Though inclined to shrink from such a public meeting, the young man was forced to comply.

A proud and happy woman was Mrs. Morrison when that day came. Dressed in her best black suit, and leaning on James' arm, she went with him to the appointed place, and with joyous but tearful eyes glanced around at hundreds of well-known faces, all assembled to do honor to her boy. There were clergymen among them; kind Mr. War-

ren, from Haredale; gentlemen of wealth and repute, merchants, shipowners, old neighbors; and plenty more who were fishers like himself, and who would, any one of them, have done as he did on that terrible day and stormy sea. Scores, whose faces were unknown to James, went and shook him heartily by the hand, and said such brave men as he made them proud of the hard workers of the land. And then they congratulated his mother; and she, poor soul, could only listen and smile through tears which were like summer rain.

Mr. Benton, too, was close at hand, with Chapman. They hastened their journey home on purpose, and Jem's old mates on board the *Sea-Gull* rejoiced with him without any envious feelings.

Then a gentleman got up and spoke. He told those who were present, what indeed they knew already, about the loss of the boat, and of those whose lives had been sacrificed, while this one had been mercifully spared. He brought tears to all eyes when he alluded to the fruits of their toil, amid stormy winds and waves, in the crews saved by their exertions,

and then of the woeful ending for so many. He spoke of the money which, so freely given, would at least place their families in comfortable circumstances, and of that which was now to be presented to James; and said, as he showed the medal, that he was glad *it* had been added to the offering, as it would be something to keep for a lifetime, and to bequeath to those who might come after.

James then stepped forward to receive the purse and medal, and in homely words said: "Gentlemen, and all who have so kindly come here, I do n't know how to thank you. I cannot feel that I deserve all that has been said, for I only tried to do my duty; and I am sure every Beachley seaman and fisherman would have done just the same, and risked their lives to save others, and been quite contented with the reward that their consciences would have given them. Still I feel very glad and proud to-day. How could I help it? A few years since I was a poor little lad in a work-house, and now—"

It was surely not unmanly in James to be so overcome with honest emotion that words

failed him when he would have compared the present and the past—when he thought of himself and his mother once in Haredale Workhouse, and now amid this assembly of people, that were met together to tell him that they honored him for his bravery and humanity.

He *did* pause—he felt compelled to do so—and those who had been listening to him applauded him warmly.

“I will only say a word or two more,” added James, “and they will be to tell you that I don’t wish to take honor to myself, or credit for anything I have done. Whenever I have been able to take a step in the right path it has been when I have chosen God’s Word for my guide. He has twice delivered me from the very jaws of death, and has not suffered the waters to overwhelm me.”

There were whispers among those that heard James’ simple words, and who felt with him; and one spoke and told the young man that he hoped the same “Guide and Protector, whose guardian care had watched over him from his youth up, would still bless and keep

him in the path of duty even unto the end. And depend upon it," added the speaker solemnly, "he who remembers his Creator in the days of his youth and strength will not be forgotten in those of age and weakness."

James had stood until now with the purse and medal in his hand. After this last brief address was concluded he bowed respectfully, went to the place where his mother was sitting, and laid the purse on her knee, saying, in a whisper, "Take it, mother, with my love." Then some one said to James that he ought to wear his medal for that day, at least; and, in compliance with this hint, he was about to fasten the honorable badge to his coat. But all at once, recalling to mind a former thought of his, he turned to his mother, and placing the medal in her hand, he said, "You must put it on, and then it will seem to make it doubly precious. I shall keep this, the gift of strangers, as long as I live, but I shall always think to myself that it was fixed here by my good mother, whose teaching, blessed by God, has been more to me than words can tell."

Mrs. Morrison's hands trembled so much

that she could hardly comply with her son's request; but she managed it at last; and then James, smiling and happy, showed his medal, attached by a ribbon to his blue jacket. Then were more kind words, more hand shakings and good wishes; after which mother and son took their homeward way together.

Mr. Warren gave his old parishioners a friendly call before he went back to Haredale. He had sympathized with them in seasons of sorrow, and he now as heartily rejoiced with them in their time of joy. The worthy pastor surveyed James from head to foot, and smilingly remarked, "Who would think that this tall, strong-limbed fellow that all the people have been running after to-day, is the same as that little Jem who used to be the least of my Sunday-scholars at Haredale? I begin to feel quite old as I look at him. Why, James, you would not hide behind the earl's monument *now*, if you were in the chancel and heard strange voices in the vestry, should you?"

The young man laughed, and replied, "I think, sir, I should not hide from two, if I

thought they were busy about such a work as yon men were after in Haredale church so long since. Besides, I believe it is only the knowledge that one is doing right that can give true courage to persevere, sir."

"Right, my dear lad. It is the 'workers of iniquity who fear where no fear is.' 'The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion:' for 'the Lord will give strength to his people.'"

The faces of Mr. Warren's listeners lighted up as they ever did when God's Holy Word was applied to the doings of daily life.

There was more kindly talk between Mrs. Morrison, James, and the clergyman; inquiries after old Haredale friends, and listening to Haredale news. Then Mr. Benton came home, and he begged so earnestly that Mr. Warren would stay until the evening that the visitor willingly accepted his hospitable invitation, and promised to remain until the last train left Beachley for Haredale.

"Jem will feel himself quite a rich man," said Mr. Benton, as he sat chatting with his guest. "He tells me, or rather his mother

tells me—for the lad gave it to her just as he received it—that the purse contained nearly sixty pounds.”

“So I understood. Well, I for one do not feel afraid that he will use it badly. From what I hear, too,” added Mr. Warren with a smile, “James and his mother are likely to want a new home before long, as this cozy nest of yours will receive another tenant, if all be true that people tell me.”

Mr. Benton laughed. “I have not made any secret of the matter,” said he, “and least of all should I make a mystery of it to you, Mr. Warren; for I hope to ask your services in completing it before the bright spring days are at an end. I believe that I am very fortunate in having gained the regard of a good young woman, and that I shall indeed find in her a helpmeet for me. I do assure you, sir, that I was not attracted by money, for Mary—that is her name—has none; but I saw that she was dutiful and affectionate to her parents, and kind and gentle to all who were about her. I saw, too, that she seemed to give an air of comfort to a place when she

was in it; and I found out that she was trying to take God's Word for her guide. I see you are smiling, Mr. Warren," added the speaker, "and perhaps you think that I am moved by my affection for this dear girl to paint her in too bright colors, but I hope you will know more about her soon, and then you will judge for yourself."

"Indeed," replied Mr. Warren, "my smile was meant to express no more than the pleasure I felt in looking at the sweet picture you were drawing, in words, of your intended wife. God forbid that, by aught of mockery, I should throw doubt upon its truth. On the contrary, I do fervently hope that the future may realize all your anticipations of happiness; and that the picture of domestic virtues, piety, joy, and peace, may be, so to speak, framed within these walls. You know, Mr. Benton, I have been for many a year past a happy husband and father, and I do trust that you will find, as I have done, that every year of your married life makes you and Mary dearer to each other. I believe, nay, I am sure, that wherever marriage is the pure and

holy union which God ordained it should be, every trial and sorrow that a wedded pair meet with together, only serves to knit them the more closely, and render it impossible that aught save death should put them asunder."

"That is just what I think, Mr. Warren. Thank you for your good wishes. I want to ask another favor of you, and that is, that you will mention the affair to Mrs. Morrison, who may perhaps feel it a little, because she has now been seven years under my roof, and has been just like a mother to me ever since she came. I don't much fancy to tell her myself, for when she is told that I hope to bring a wife home, she will look upon it as a notice to quit; though I have put it off for some time, that Jem might be out of his apprenticeship and earning a man's wages before he had to undertake to find a home for his mother."

"I do not doubt you have acted throughout with much thought and kindness; and if you fancy that Mrs. Morrison will be otherwise than grateful, you will find yourself mistaken. I will call her just now, and Jem too."

"Then I will go and leave you, Mr. War-

ren, and you can talk things over with her; and please to tell her that I shall always consider that, next to James, I have a right to care for the comfort of one who has cared so much for mine."

"Nonsense, man, sit still," was Mr. Warren's good-humored answer. "Who so fit to tell the good woman these things as yourself? From whose lips will these words of thanks come so gracefully as from your own? Call in the Beachley hero, and the hero's mother, and speak to them about this subject."

Mrs. Morrison and her son were accordingly called, and in a minute or two they joined the master of the house and his guest in the parlor. "I was afraid you would think me rather late, sir," said Mrs. Morrison; "but, with being out during the fore part of the day, I had some little matters to attend to. But tea is just ready."

"Bring it in then, if you please, Mrs. Morrison, and we can all talk over the meal," returned Mr. Benton.

The table was quickly spread with one of those nice, fresh-looking meals which country

people know so well how to prepare for honored guests. There were light tea-cakes of the widow's manufacture, bread and butter both white and brown, slices of pink ham prettily garnished with green, curled parsley-leaves, and the other accompaniments. The tea-service was of plain white china, cheap to purchase, but beautifully pure-looking for use.

Mr. Warren complimented the widow on the general effect of her preparations. "The sight of your tea-table might tempt a queen to sit down and partake, Mrs. Morrison," said he. "I think you must know that we owe as much of our comfort to the manner in which food is set before us as to the food itself. And you have the art of pleasing both the eye and the taste, I doubt not. I can answer for the first already."

Mrs. Morrison looked much gratified, and told Mr. Warren how glad she was to hear him express such satisfaction at the sight of her tea-table arrangements, and she hoped he would find all as good as he expected. Then the little party sat down, and while they were at tea the clergyman said to Mrs. Morrison,

"Our friend Benton has made a grand discovery lately."

"Indeed, sir. I hope he has found out something that will be a blessing to himself."

"I hope so too, and he feels pretty sure of it. But it seems odd to me that he has lived eight-and-thirty years in this world, and never found it out before now, though the Bible tells him all about it in plain words. Now don't you want to know what it is?"

"Ah, sir," she replied with a smile, "I do believe I can guess without being told. Mr. Benton has found out that it is not good for man to be alone."

"That is just it, Mrs. Morrison; and Mr. Benton thinks he has found a fitting partner. He hardly liked to tell you this himself; why, I am sure I need not say."

"Indeed, sir," said the good woman very earnestly, "there is no person that will be more pleased than I shall to see Mr. Benton happily married. He has been good to me and mine; and I pray that every act of kindness may be paid back to him under the roof which has been for several years past a peace-

ful home to me. He took me when I was but an ailing woman, not fit for hard work, and here my health has improved, my wants have been provided for; and to my boy— But you know all about it, Mr. Warren. I need n't tell you what Mr. Benton has done for us both."

"You owe me nothing, *mother*," said Mr. Benton, giving his worthy housekeeper this name to express his respect for her. "In Mr. Warren's presence I want to thank you and your boy for faithful services rendered by both in your appointed places. And now your lad is able to carry out what I know has been the wish of his heart ever since he was a child—he can take his mother to a home of his own providing. I don't mean to offer him any help in performing this part of his duty to you, because I know that he has the power to make things comfortable for you, and that he would almost be jealous of my forestalling him. So I shall show my gratitude for your motherly kindnesses, and my trust in him, after a different fashion."

"You have done far more than enough," was the reply of both mother and son.

After Mr. Warren's departure, Mrs. Morrison asked a question. "If I may make so bold, Mr. Benton," said she, "when do you think the wedding will be?"

"I will take you to see some one who will tell you all about it," returned Mr. Benton with a happy smile. How pleased the widow was at this mark of confidence!

Mr. Benton was as good as his word; and at that meeting not only was the time for the wedding talked about, but Mrs. Morrison found how much her convenience had been considered by Mr. Benton's intended wife.

"I have heard a great deal about you, Mrs. Morrison, and I am sure I shall be glad to know more. Mr. Benton would so much like you to have a house near his, that we may be neighbors when—"

The happy girl blushed, and the widow added, "When you are not Miss Mary, my dear, but mistress of the house in which I have served one of the kindest of masters. May you spend many happy years in it! I shall look forward to having a daughter myself, some day. And I think, my dear, that

I shall never feel as some mothers do—jealous of a son's wife; for I know that *her* place in his heart and mine will be quite different, and neither could ever fill the one that belongs to the other.”

After this first meeting, Mrs. Morrison and Miss Mary had many another before that bright day in the beginning of May, when the wedding really took place. During Mr. Benton's absence, the widow showed her her future home, with all its arrangements; pointed out the room once occupied by old Isaac, and brought happy tears to the eyes of the listener, by describing Mr. Benton's tenderness to the friend of his youth.

In compliance with Mary's express wish, Old Isaac's room remained unaltered. “For,” she said, “it will be so pleasant to look at it, and think why it was arranged as it is.”

Meanwhile James was not idle. He first looked about himself, and having seen what he thought would be a suitable spot for their future home, he took his mother to the place. The house fixed upon by him, and afterwards approved by her and their friend, was a neat

four-room dwelling, one of a row of new cottages, which would be ready for tenants in May. Each had a little garden front and back; and instead of palisades, a neat paling of unbarked poles, split lengthwise, formed a fence between the gardens and the road. The rent was moderate; and as there were no tenants to leave at the term, James and his mother could whitewash, clean, and select and arrange their neat furniture, bought with Jem's savings, and a portion of the money out of *the purse*. When all was completed, the young man's delight was unbounded. He had by his own hands won a home for his mother, and there was every prospect of his being able to provide her with all the comforts of one during future years.

The wedding-day came at last. But not at Beachley did the minister pronounce the marriage blessing. In the old church at Haredale the rite was performed; and the clergyman who joined their hands was an old acquaintance, Mr. Warren. And the now thriving and prosperous snack-owner was not too proud to point out Haredale poor-

house, to his young bride, and to tell her that he, as a boy, had been indebted to its shelter; nor yet did he fail to ascribe his present prosperity to the blessing of Him who is ever ready to hear and to help all who come to Him in faith nothing doubting.

At the appointed time Mr. Benton and his wife returned, and James led his mother to the home he had earned for her

James had been at Beachley since Mr. Benton's marriage, and now expected to take his old place again on board the *Sea-Gull*. But on the morning after his master's return he called for James to go and look at a new fishing-vessel that was just ready for launching. It belonged to Mr. Benton, and was to be named the *Mary*, after his young wife.

"What do you think of the vessel?" said he, as he entered Jem's new home with him half an hour after.

James could not help praising it, for the *Mary* was the handsomest fishing-vessel ever built at Beachley.

"Chapman is to go as master," said Mrs. Benton, with a curious glance at James.

James thought this quite right; but still he was very sorry to lose him from the *Sea-Gull*, with the prospect of having a stranger over him in place of his old friend. He frankly told Mr. Benton this; but added, "I hope, sir, I shall not serve you less faithfully than I have done under Chapman. Though I shall be sorry to miss him."

"Yes, I dare say. But I don't mean to put a stranger into the *Sea-Gull*. It is not my plan to neglect the claims of those who have been faithful in a lower station. So the long and the short of it is, Jem, you are master of the *Sea-Gull* from this minute, unless you say 'No' to my offer of the place."

James thankfully accepted the offered situation, and as faithfully strove to perform its duties. He has filled it hitherto to the entire satisfaction of Mr. Benton. As yet he has not made the discovery that his master did a while ago, and therefore Mrs. Morrison has no one to call daughter. But she may have some day, and in the meantime she thanks God that she has a son.

There are two happy households near each

other, the dwellers in the four-room cottage and those in Mr. Benton's larger home. Mary is a mother now, and when the young parent held her boy in her arms for the first time, his father whispered to her how Old Isaac prayed that *he* might have children to be the comfort of his age as he had striven to soothe the last days of his own humble friend. And so Mrs. Benton feels glad at the thought that an old Christian's blessing seems to overshadow her baby boy.

I said there were two happy households. They are happy because those who form them, while trying to perform their duty in this world, do not forget that they are only "strangers and sojourners in it." They wish to be among those servants whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching.



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